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In the 1980s:  
The Role of the  
Service Secretaries**

**RICHARD J. DALESKI**

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**DEFENSE MANAGEMENT IN THE 1980s:  
THE ROLE OF  
THE SERVICE SECRETARIES**

by

<sup>(10)</sup>  
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**National Security Affairs Monograph Series 80-8** ✓

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## FOREWORD

Since 1947, nearly every major study of the Department of Defense has recommended substantive changes to the responsibilities and staffs of the "Service Secretaries"—the civilian Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Some studies have even recommended abolishing the positions. These offices have survived despite more than three decades of allegations that the Secretaries and their principal subordinates lack experience, are unfamiliar with service issues, serve short tenures, and have had their legal prerogatives diminished.

What does the decade of the eighties hold for the Service Secretaries? This is the central question addressed by Richard J. Daleski, an Air Force Colonel and Vice Dean of Faculty of The National War College. Although acknowledging some validity to the conventional criticisms, the author cites numerous cases in which Service Secretaries have helped to resolve sensitive defense issues. Because of their organizational setting, the Service Secretaries have been able to mediate in controversies between the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the uniformed services. Coming from civilian, often business, environments, they have brought fresh, innovative approaches to defense problem-solving; and lacking affiliations with the military, they have strengthened the constitutional requirement for civilian control of the military.

This is not to say that the author believes that improvements are not desirable. On the contrary, he proposes a set of selection criteria, changes in Secretarial working relations, and adjustments in organization. These proposals are offered to enhance the potential of Service Secretaries to contribute more effectively to defense management.



**R. G. GARD, Jr.**  
**Lieutenant General, USA**  
**President**

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Colonel Richard J. Daleski, United States Air Force, is the Vice Dean of Faculty of The National War College. While serving with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, he participated in the Defense Organization Study. Colonel Daleski also served with the Headquarters Staff of the US Air Force as Chief of Plans and Policy. He was a Federal Executive Fellow at the Brookings Institution for a year, and taught at the US Air Force Academy for several years. Colonel Daleski is a graduate of the US Military Academy; he earned a master's degree in public administration at Princeton University, and a doctoral degree in comparative and international politics at the University of Denver.



# **DEFENSE MANAGEMENT IN THE 1980s: THE ROLE OF THE SERVICE SECRETARIES**

## **TRADITIONAL CRITICISMS OF THE SERVICE SECRETARIES**

Since 1947, few executive departments or agencies have been more studied and subsequently more reorganized than the Nation's Defense Establishment.<sup>1</sup> Recently, the Carter administration's commitments to eliminate waste and inefficiency and to improve the responsiveness of government resulted in yet another comprehensive reorganization study of the Department of Defense (DOD). The Defense Establishment—by virtue of its size alone—seems likely to be a continuing focus of reorganization proposals. Prominent among such proposals are likely to be recommendations to eliminate the civilian Secretaries of the military Services (Army, Navy, Air Force) and their associated staffs, or at least to substantially revise their present functions.

Such proposals hardly would be surprising. Since 1947, at least six major studies and numerous commentaries have advocated the elimination or substantial modification of the civilian Service Secretaries. To some, Service Secretaries are anachronisms—without useful function, irrelevant to contemporary defense policy—and indeed major contributors to the "confusion" that surrounds the discussion of important defense issues.<sup>2</sup> Critics argue that eliminating or substantially reducing the size of Service secretariats would "tighten the chain of command" from the Secretary of Defense to the military Chiefs of Staff, resulting in greater efficiency and responsiveness in all defense matters.<sup>3</sup> Eliminating the Service secretariats would also save money. All told, in fiscal year 1979, over 1,500 people, costing about \$40 million, were assigned to the offices of the Service Secretaries.

In this writer's view, these arguments are specious. Deceptively attractive, criticisms of the Service Secretaries are often based on a misunderstanding of the sources of present secretarial shortcomings and the continuing needs of defense management. There are deficiencies in the present secretariats that impair their effectiveness, to be sure. Yet, despite numerous institutional and other encumbrances, Service Secretaries can, and often do, make unique contributions to defense management.

Before addressing either of these concerns, however, it will be useful to describe the present position of the Service Secretary in the DOD organization and to review the evolution of the Service Secretary's office as well as the principal criticisms of its operation. These discussions will provide a necessary backdrop to a consideration of the Service Secretary's vital managerial contributions and the conditions associated with their realization.

## **SERVICE SECRETARIES WITHIN THE DOD ORGANIZATION**

The present organization of the Department of Defense is shown in Figure 1. The major managerial components of the Department are the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the military departments.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) includes a Deputy Secretary, the Under Secretaries for Policy and Research and Engineering, the General Counsel, six Assistant Secretaries of Defense, the Advisor for NATO Affairs, and the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs. In fiscal year 1979, nearly 1,570 personnel were assigned to OSD. Although not included in OSD personnel accounts, defense-wide agencies (such as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and the Defense Logistics Agency) also provide staff assistance to the Secretary of Defense as he may direct.

The Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the immediate military staff of the Secretary of Defense as well as the principal military advisory body to the President and the National Security Council. In FY 1979, about 1,300 personnel were assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff Organization.

The military departments are each served by two staffs—a secretariat, and a Service staff—both of which provide assistance to Service Secretaries.

The secretariats include the Under Secretary, three Assistant Secretaries, the General Counsel, and special staff offices (legislative liaison, information, administration, etc.), and are the smallest staff entities in the Defense Department.<sup>4</sup> In FY 1979, the Army secretariat numbered about 378, the Air Force about 320, and the Navy (including the Marine Corps) about 852.

FIGURE 1

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

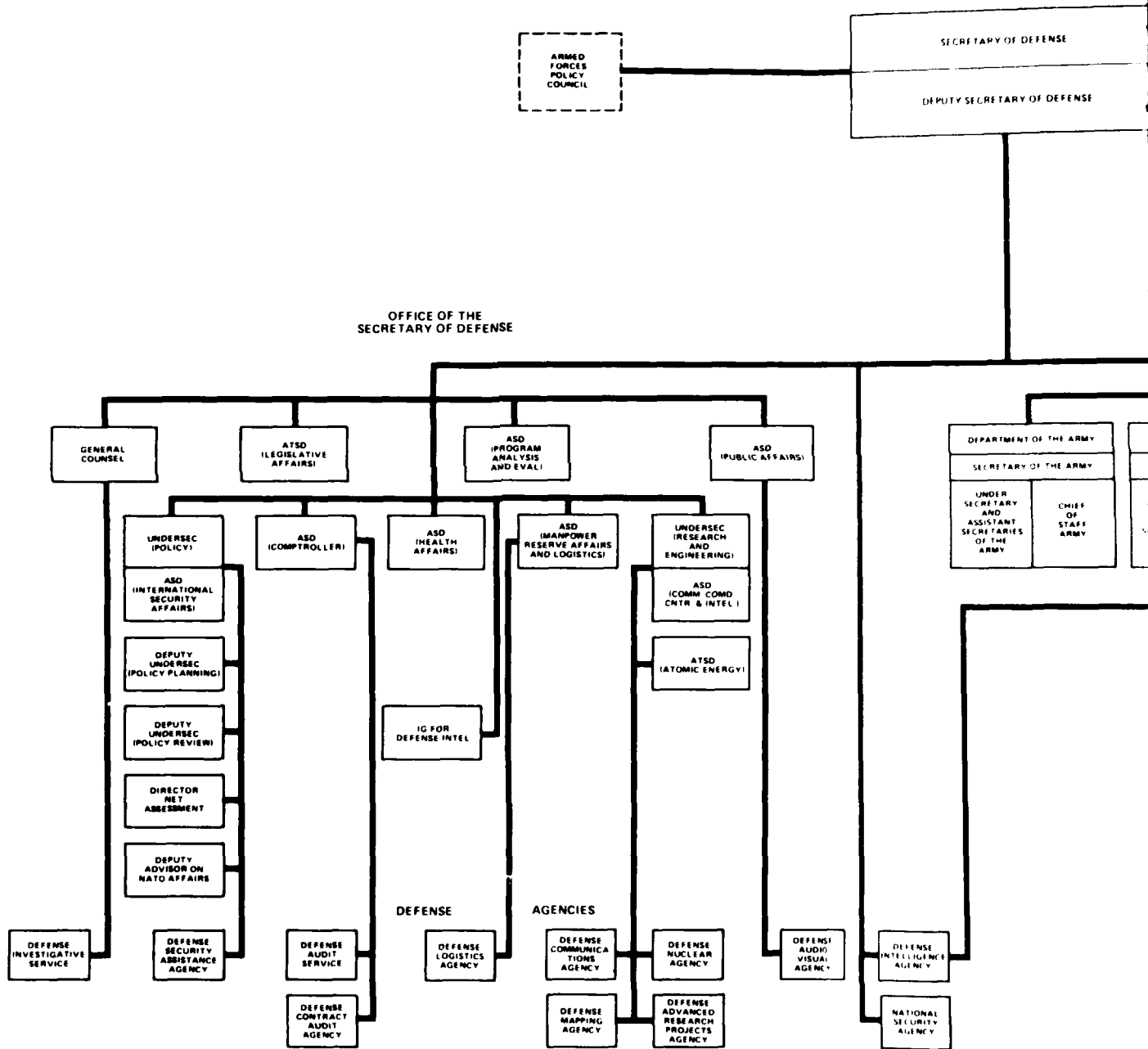
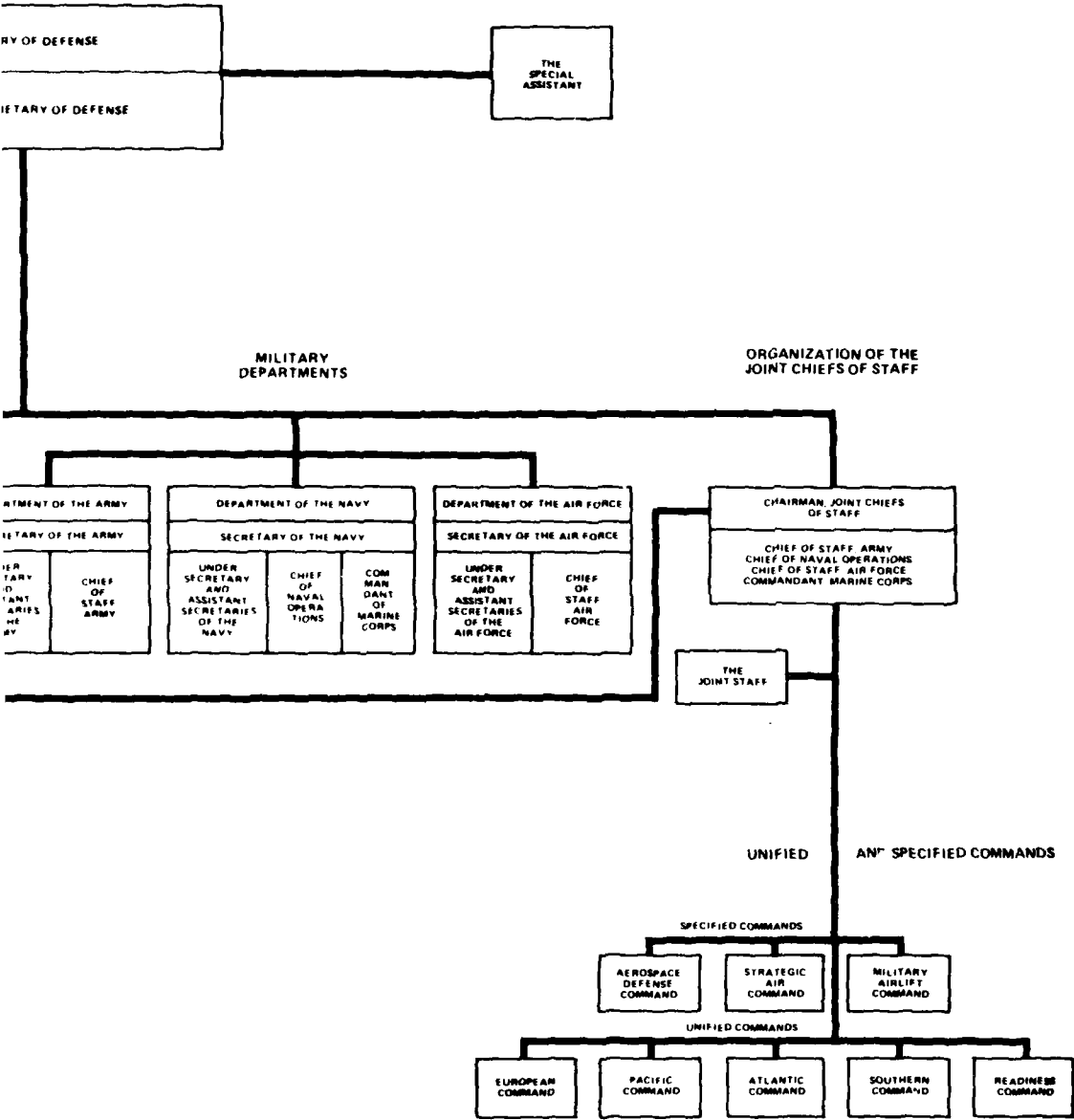


FIGURE 1

IT OF DEFENSE



Service staffs, on the other hand, are the largest staff entities in the Defense Department. While Service staffs do support the secretariats, each staff is immediately responsible to its respective military Chief of Service. Service staffs include the military Chief's special staff, plus his principal deputies and their staffs (plans, operations, personnel, logistics, etc.). In FY 1979, the Army Staff included about 3,400 personnel, the Air Staff about 3,000, and the Navy Staff about 2,250.

An illustrative military department organizational chart is at Figure 2.

## **THE CHANGING SECRETARIAL ROLE**

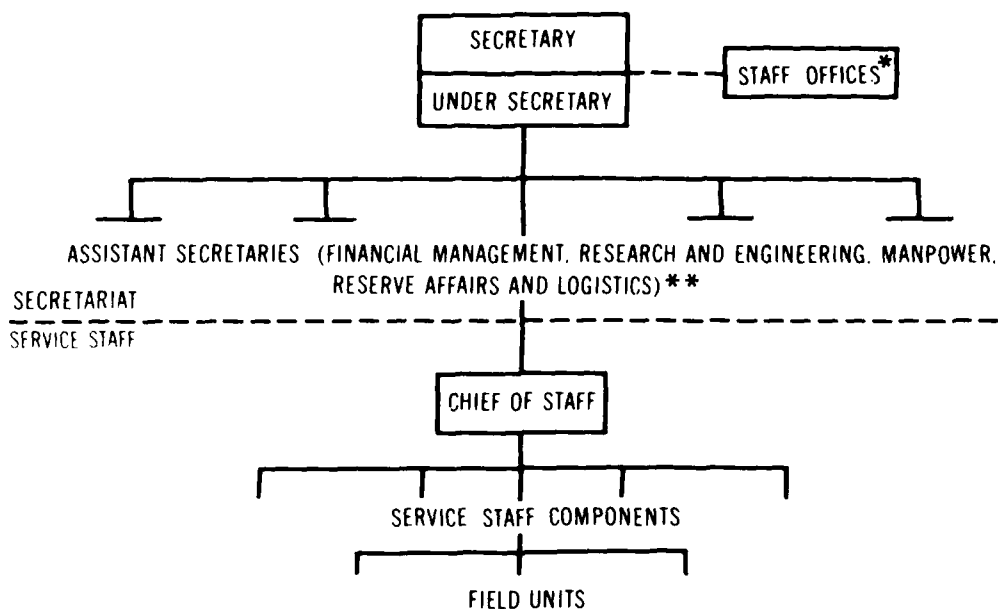
### **Eroded Legal Prerogatives and Formal Opportunities For Influence**

Prior to 1947, Service Secretaries were the sole members of the President's Cabinet responsible for military affairs. However, subsequent defense reorganizations have gutted the Service Secretaries' legal prerogatives. Especially between 1949 and 1958, there was a sharp erosion in the Service Secretaries' organizational position and opportunities for influence in defense matters. The 1947 National Security Act established the Secretary of Defense as the "Principal Assistant to the President in all matters relating to National Security." In addition to providing the Secretary of Defense with authority to establish "general policies and programs" and to "exercise general direction, authority and control" for the Military Establishment, the act also charged the Secretary of Defense to eliminate "unnecessary duplication or overlap in procurement, supply, transportation, storage, health, and research"; and to supervise and coordinate the "budget estimates for the National Establishment."<sup>5</sup>

Despite the broad charter of the Secretary of Defense, each Service Secretary formally retained considerable influence in national security affairs. Initially, because his staff was small, the principal civilian advisers of the Secretary of Defense were, in fact, the Service Secretaries. Further, the 1947 act provided that each military Service was to be maintained as an individual executive department, separately administered, with its Secretary serving as a permanent member of the National Security Council, thereby assuring the Service Secretary direct access to the President. Perhaps most significant, the act provided for a "Reserve Powers

FIGURE 2

## A MILITARY DEPARTMENT



\*Staff offices include the Administrative Assistant, General Counsel, Legislative Liaison, and Information (Public Affairs). These functions are not duplicated on the service staffs, but are essential to the efficient functioning of Military Departments. Eliminating secretariats would not remove the need for the continuation of most of these functions. Thus eliminating secretariats would result in relatively modest manpower savings. Our estimate is that elimination of secretariats would eliminate at best about 25 manpower spaces per service.

\*\*There are slight differences in titles between services. The Army also has an assistant secretary for civil works.

Clause" in which "whatever was not specifically spelled out . . . about the powers of the Secretary of Defense, as regarded the individual services, was to be retained by the Secretaries of the respective Services."<sup>6</sup> Thus, by providing only a modest staff for the Secretary of Defense and retaining important legal prerogatives for Service Secretaries, the 1947 act sustained much of the prestige and influence associated with the Service Secretaries prior to 1947.

The 1947 organizational arrangements, however, in the views of both the first Secretary of Defense, James V. Forrestal, and the Hoover Commission of 1948, were clearly unsatisfactory. In their views, neither effective management nor an integrated defense program (the two major rationales for the 1947 legislation) had been achieved. For those reasons, the 1947 National Security Act was amended in 1949.

The 1949 amendments resulted in a significant diminution of the Service Secretaries' position. Each of the military departments lost both its seat on the National Security Council and its status as an individual executive department. A single Department of Defense, replacing the National Military Establishment of 1947, was created with the Secretary of Defense holding sole statutory authority on defense matters. The "Reserve Powers Clause" that had acted to protect the prerogatives of the military departments was repealed. To assist the Secretary of Defense in discharging his increased responsibilities, his own staff was enlarged by creating the positions of Deputy Secretary and three Assistant Secretaries of Defense (ASDs). By changing the Service-dominated Research and Development Board and the Munitions Board into DOD staff agencies, the 1949 amendments further enhanced the influence of the Secretary of Defense in those areas.<sup>7</sup> Among the most important of the 1949 changes was the creation of a Defense Comptroller and the establishment of similar positions in each of the Service departments.<sup>8</sup> The DOD Comptroller "was given authority over all defense agencies in budget estimates, accounting, audit, and statistical reporting, subject to the 'authority and direction' of the secretary of defense."<sup>9</sup>

In assessing the significance of the 1949 amendments on the role of Service Secretaries, Professor John C. Ries has written:

As the Secretary of Defense came to rely on his assistant secretaries and Board chairmen rather than the service departments for advice, the services and especially the civilian secretaries began to lose their role in departmental policy

making. What was more, the reduced role of the service secretaries produced a situation similar to that characterizing the operation of the War and Navy Departments during World War II. As individuals, the Joint Chiefs were responsible to their service secretaries. Collectively, the Joint Chiefs constituted the military advisors of the Secretary of Defense. And since the Joint Chiefs were the only service department representatives with a statutory role in the departmental policy process, they became the spokesmen for the services. The service secretaries, as was the case with Stimson and Knox, were bypassed.<sup>10</sup>

The 1953 and 1958 amendments to the National Security Act of 1947 further circumscribed the Service Secretaries' formal opportunities for influence on defense matters. While the 1953 Rockefeller Report called for the Service Secretaries to be "operating heads of their respective departments in all aspects" and to continue as the "principal civilian advisors" in DOD, the broad thrust of the report nevertheless was to enlarge further the influence of the Secretary of Defense at the expense of Service Secretaries.<sup>11</sup> The report recommended that the lines of authority within DOD were to be made "clear and unmistakable" by confirming through "decisive administrative action . . . , the direction, authority, and control of the Secretary over all agencies of the Department, including the three military departments."<sup>12</sup> Thus, while the Service Secretaries were now to be included in the chain of command from the President and Secretary of Defense to military commands, this change in itself provided no additional formal authority to Service Secretaries. In fact, because it removed Service Chiefs and the JCS from the command line to a staff role, this change seems rather to have been implemented principally to enhance the authority of the Secretary of Defense in his relationship with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>13</sup> What is most significant about the 1953 legislation was the elimination of Service-oriented statutory boards (manpower, research and development, health, etc.) in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the establishment of six additional ASDs to assist the secretary in discharging his increased responsibilities in those areas.

With ASDs now sharing responsibility for those important functions, both the Service Secretary's formal control of his department and his role as policymaker quite obviously were diminished.<sup>14</sup> As one observer noted, the "support of possibly as many as ten major assistants, instead of only three, inevitably meant that the Secretary would be able to dig more deeply into and thereby control more closely what the three military departments were doing."<sup>15</sup>



To a number of observers much of the enhanced role of ASDs was masked by the distinction between "line" (Service Secretaries) and "staff" (ASDs). In formal organizational theory, staffs, by definition, could not directly influence line operations. However, as a reflection of the reality of DOD management, this distinction was no more than fiction.<sup>16</sup> The ASDs clearly were commanding increasingly more influence in defense decisionmaking at the expense of Service Secretaries.

Despite the broad sweep toward centralized control in OSD embodied in the 1953 legislation, Secretaries of Defense continued to insist that they possessed "insufficient" authority to manage the department.<sup>17</sup> Separately administered military departments were, in Secretary of Defense Neil H. McElroy's words, "sand in the gear box."<sup>18</sup> Whatever legal authority the Service Secretary had possessed in his relations with ASDs by virtue of the statutory requirement that each Service department be separately administered, was removed in the 1958 legislation. Service departments now were only to be "separately organized." This change, it was believed, would facilitate the "proper delegation of authority and the free exchange of information" between ASDs and "assistant secretaries and other subordinates within the military departments."<sup>19</sup> The amendments permitted ASDs to issue orders to military departments provided they had the written authorization of the Secretary of Defense. Additionally, authority to transfer the roles and missions of the Services, subject only to congressional veto, was confirmed to rest with the Secretary of Defense who thus "could indirectly merge the three services."<sup>20</sup>

Further, the Secretary of Defense's authority over research, development, and procurement was confirmed specifically. The Director of Defense Research and Engineering, in his capacity as supervisor of all defense-related scientific and technical matters, became the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense in these important areas. The director thereby replaced the Service Secretaries who, in the 1953 legislation, were to be "principal civilian advisors" in DOD. Finally, the rather modest role then played by Service Secretaries in the command chain was eliminated.<sup>21</sup>

The Secretary of Defense began almost immediately to consolidate functions and thereby extend his control over activities common to several of the military Services. The Defense Atomic Support Agency (1959), the Defense Communications Agency (1960), the Defense Intelligence Agency (1961), the Defense Supply

Agency (1961),<sup>22</sup> the Defense Contract Audit Agency (1965), each responsible solely to the Secretary of Defense, acquired responsibilities for functions that previously had resided almost exclusively in the military departments.

Although not necessarily affecting the Service Secretary's legal authority or organizational position, subsequent reorganizations or transfers of functions gave the appearance of a further erosion of the Service Secretary's position. Among these were the establishment of the Defense Investigative Service (1971), Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (1972), Defense Civil Preparedness Agency (1972), Defense Mapping Agency (1972), and the Defense Security Assistance Agency (1972).

Similarly, the Service Secretary's relationship with his Service's combat forces also was perceived as having eroded. As one commentator observed,

Secretary McNamara continued the practice of assigning combat units of the three military departments to unified and specified commands. By 1961, with the creation of STRIKE command, virtually all combat forces has been assigned to unified and specified commands who report directly to the Secretary [of Defense] through the JCS.<sup>23</sup>

Collectively, the establishment of DOD-wide agencies in areas traditionally managed by Service Secretaries, and the removal of operational combat forces from the Service Secretaries' responsibilities, seemed quite logical in terms of technical complexity, cost efficiencies, and effective operational control. Nonetheless, these actions obviously narrowed the scope of the Service Secretaries' policy and managerial roles. Thus, questions arose concerning the continued viability of those roles.

A major, and in the view of some observers, *the* most significant challenge to the Service Secretaries' position, arose from Secretary of Defense McNamara's penchant to rely principally on ASDs to oversee defense programs and serve as advisors on all major defense activities. The widespread use of systems analysis as a decisionmaking tool within DOD contributed to centralization of decisionmaking within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In addition to its extensive use in the evaluation of single Service issues, systems analysis was used to organize information in a form that focused on the interdependencies between weapon systems advocated by each of the Services. Because, in McNamara's view,

Service Secretaries advanced largely narrow Service viewpoints, the civilian advisory function on all major defense decisions was moved from the Services to OSD.<sup>24</sup> The responsibilities of the ASD (Systems Analysis), for example, included the review of all requirements for forces, weapons systems, equipment, personnel, and nuclear weapons.<sup>25</sup> The Service Secretaries objected to this arrangement, and one resigned in protest. Even among those who remained, the common view held that the influence of Service Secretaries had reached a nadir in 1962.<sup>26</sup> However, by 1965, a modus vivendi of sorts between OSD and the Service Secretaries had been reached. Internal management of military departments, not broad policy, became the principal focus of Service secretarial responsibility.<sup>27</sup>

The formal role of the Service Secretary has changed little since Robert McNamara departed the Pentagon (1968). If anything, because the locus of national security decisionmaking on strategy and policy was shifted to the White House during the Nixon administration, a Service Secretary's potential role in strategy and policy could be viewed as circumscribed further. While it could be said that during Secretary Melvin R. Laird's tenure "participatory management" enlarged the opportunities for Service secretarial participation in DOD decisionmaking, nothing was done to enlarge the legal authority of Service Secretaries.<sup>28</sup> No formal role in strategy and national security policy was created. Even informally, opportunities for the Service Secretaries to participate in or influence US military strategy deliberations were nonexistent. Several Secretaries complained publicly that they were completely uninformed about the employment of forces (in Cambodia and in the bombing of Hanoi) for whom they had logistical and training responsibilities.<sup>29</sup> These revelations reinforced the notion of secretarial impotence.

Perhaps more importantly, any enhanced influence a Service Secretary might have gained within OSD was likely to have been diminished in its effect on national security policy (and in perceptions of the Secretary's role) by the Nixon administration's decision to move authority on defense issues away from OSD to "institutions outside the Defense Department [principally the National Security Council] and to the military."<sup>30</sup>

In sum, successive reorganizations and separate managerial initiatives by the various Secretaries of Defense have moved the locus of authority and opportunities for influence on national security matters from the Service Secretaries to the Office of the Secretary of

Defense, to the Secretary of Defense himself, or to agencies outside the Department of Defense.

### **Other Factors Contributing to the Decline of Service Secretaries**

The reasons for the changes in secretarial formal authority and influence opportunities were numerous. The perceived need of the various Secretaries of Defense for fuller control of departmental activities through centralization has been a paramount consideration. So, too, were the actions of various Presidents to bring the coordination and control of national security policy into the White House. But of more immediate concern to us is the influence that perceived deficiencies associated with the stewardship of the large majority of Service Secretaries had on departmental management arrangements. These deficiencies have provided additional rationale for centralization initiatives and also have fueled criticisms of the Service secretarial role in contemporary defense management. A closer look at the more prominent deficiencies is in order.

*Absence of Previous Experience.* Despite an extensive erosion of the Service Secretary's formal position, the scope of his responsibilities remains substantial—to organize, train, and equip forces for assignment to unified commands. Yet, it has been argued convincingly that the Service Secretaries' actual contributions in those functions have been minimal because of the personal characteristics of many who have served in those positions. More often than not, secretarial positions have been seen as ways of satisfying political debts with the result that incumbents typically have suffered from little or no relevant experience in defense management.

The lack of previous experience in government generally is characteristic of all political appointees, but the deficiency is more serious in defense areas. As the Defense Manpower Commission recently observed,

the requirements for performance, often exacting, related only imperfectly to the previous experiences of the appointee, regardless of what that person might have done. The demands of those Defense offices are unique. Even insofar as they are similar to roles elsewhere, such similarity often can be misleading because of altered legal constraints, Government requirements on accountability, and a unique set of priorities.<sup>31</sup>

For example, the complexities of defense materiel management—a major responsibility of Service Secretaries—can be illustrated by the large number of directives associated with the procurement of a single weapon system. In the concept formulation phase of the Air Force F-15 aircraft project alone, there were 1,282 directives affecting the systems management process.<sup>32</sup> The inability of top-level managers from small and medium-sized firms to successfully address these complex defense issues with management styles derived from their civilian experience has been documented by a close student of the defense procurement process.<sup>33</sup> Thus, as pertains to the procurement of the C-5A cargo aircraft, he found "memos indicating that the Secretary of Air Force was not aware of the pricing formula that would increase the Air Force's price, not by a quarter of a billion dollars, but in the neighborhood of two billion dollars."<sup>34</sup>

In a similar vein, lack of knowledge among Service Secretaries regarding personnel issues was noted by the Defense Manpower Commission. Regarding the relative lack of competence of Secretaries to address personnel and other issues meaningfully, the commission noted:

In all of the services there is a distinct lack of definition as to what the duties of this layer (service secretaries) are other than being "responsible" for policy.<sup>35</sup>

**Short Tenures.** The consequences of the "inexperience" or "lack of knowledge" deficiency have been exacerbated by the typically short tenure of incumbents; few have had an opportunity to learn on-the-job, as most appointees have served only briefly in the Service secretariat. Although the range is from a few months to 7 years,<sup>36</sup> the average tenure of a post-World War II Service Secretary has been only 2 years and 4 months.<sup>37</sup> In certain key supporting staff billets, Assistant Secretaries have averaged only 14 months on the job.<sup>38</sup>

The implications of short tenures in civilian secretariats are considerable. It is unreasonable to suppose that a Service Secretary could significantly influence a budget or personnel program until he has experienced at least one full cycle of that activity. To gain that experience requires as much as 18 months. Thus, given an average tenure of 28 months, few Secretaries and their immediate assistants are involved in more than one or two cycles before leaving government service.

Another important effect of short tenures is the inherent constraint it imposes on secretarial influence in weapons procurement management. Apart from the complexity of the weapons acquisition process itself, the length of time required to develop new programs inhibits effective secretarial action. Secretary McNamara, for example, estimated that 3 to 5 years were needed to develop new programs.<sup>39</sup> Few Service Secretaries boast tenures as long. The Advanced Manned Strategic Aircraft (AMSA) program which resulted in the B-1 bomber had been associated with five Air Force Secretaries. And the final production decision on B-1 was made during the tenure of a sixth secretary.

*Inadequate Staffs.* A prominent factor associated with the decline of Service Secretaries is that their staffs are viewed as inadequate—too small and too incapable to be effective. As Table 1 shows, Service secretariat staffs are much smaller than their principal rivals within DOD in the competition to satisfy the needs of the Secretary of Defense.

Of course, a small staff alone does not necessarily explain Service secretarial ineffectiveness. More important is that these staffs traditionally have been incapable or reluctant to pursue vigorously a new Secretary's policies. There are several reasons. Some staff members hold agendas or priorities different from those of the Secretary and shape staffing actions accordingly. Other staff without specific agendas who might be expected to respond to secretarial initiatives often are reluctant to do so because of the typically short tenures of political executives. "Risk avoidance"—a reluctance of staffs "to get out front with a political executive" and be identified with his policies because of the real possibility that the political executive's successor may pursue diametrically opposed policies<sup>40</sup>—means that Secretaries encounter large problems in effecting policy and in projecting an image that their contributions are vital to defense management.

**Table 1. DOD Staff Strengths: Selected  
Years, 1948-1979**

Year	OSD Staff	JCS Staff	Military Staffs			Secretariats		
			Army	Air Force	Navy	Army	Air Force	Navy**
1948	190	408	3853	3577	NA	1033	311	1569
1954	2412*	537	17740	7490	2660	976	479	1612
1964	2231*	1580	9007	5285	4053	938	551	1320
1968	2883*	2011	10164	5375	5226	939	518	1371
1975	2167*	1482	5547	4257	3415	377	450	979
1977	2037*	1260	4500	3870	3925	386	401	1032
1979	1568*	1309	3381	2930	2228	378	320	852

Sources: Government Accounting Office, Defense Activity Survey; DOD Historian; Service Secretariat Administrative Offices; JCS Administrative Services.

\*The staffs of the 11 Defense Agencies are not included as OSD staff.

\*\*The Department of the Navy, which supervises both Navy and Marine Corps activities, has centralized civilian personnel and financial management functions in its secretariat. Those two functions account for about 73 percent of secretariat billets. By way of comparison, the Navy Assistant Secretary for Financial Management has 550 personnel assigned to his immediate supervision. Comparable numbers for the Army and Air Force Assistant Secretaries are 20 and 16 respectively.

NA: not available.

*Absence of Relevant Information.* All of the foregoing considerations contribute to the existence of a crucial and often overlooked factor in explaining Service secretarial ineffectiveness—the inability of a Secretary to acquire all relevant information regarding specific initiatives to which he gives his support. "In any complex decisional process, those who affect the process most significantly are often those who control the relevant sources of information."<sup>41</sup> Far too often, civilian Secretaries are without the information necessary to consider alternatives to staff-generated policy initiatives.<sup>42</sup> In those circumstances, Service Secretaries may

be inclined to "go along" with initiatives developed by OSD or the Service Chief and his staff.<sup>43</sup>

And even if a Secretary were not inclined to "go along," any assertive action on his part would necessarily be taken from a position of relative ignorance with baneful effects on secretarial effectiveness.

*Erosion of Civilian Control.* This tendency to "go along" also has led critics to disparage the Service Secretary's contributions to civilian control of the Armed Forces. As Paul Hammond explains:

In the 1950s the Secretary was less necessary to the service, for its chief was often a more effective champion than he in OSD, the new layer of government where so many of the questions vital to it were settled. . . . As the bonds of the Secretary-Chief alliance were weakened by unification, nothing took their place, for the alternative basis for secretarial control, a civilian staff, had neither the cohesion nor the position in the military establishment necessary to make it a counterweight to the policy planning of the Chief of Staff. In the service departments the civilian Secretaries have therefore been largely advocates and expeditors of policies formulated by others.<sup>44</sup>

This view was reinforced by the Symington Committee, which studied defense organization for President-elect Kennedy. Symington argued that the "dual system of civilian control" utilizing both the Service Secretaries and the Secretary of Defense diminished, rather than enhanced, civilian control because the dual system made it "more difficult to subordinate service interest to national interest."<sup>45</sup> Service Secretaries were viewed not as assets but rather as liabilities in the attempts to manage DOD by the Secretary of Defense.

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Taken together, the preceding criticisms of Service Secretaries—no role in strategic planning, and little or no role in budgeting, personnel management, weapons acquisitions, and thus ineffective civilian control at the service level—argue against the continuation of these positions. Several reorganizations in the Defense Department have enlarged the role of OSD, with most of the Service Secretaries' functions now also performed by ASDs or the Secretary of Defense himself. Functions peculiar to individual Services are also performed by the military Service staffs. Service Secretaries occupy an ever-diminishing middle ground. And, one can



argue, the ability of Service secretariats to hold or expand this middle ground is seriously compromised by the multiservice nature of many defense programs and shortcomings of most incumbents in secretariat positions.

For those reasons, members of the Defense Manpower Commission recently recommended that the Service Secretary's role be further diminished through a reorganization that would create a Deputy Secretary of Defense for Resources Management over Service Secretaries and their establishments, and that the "intermediate management layer of the Assistant Secretaries of Army, Navy, and Air Force should be disestablished."<sup>46</sup> Such a recommendation is not surprising given the unmistakable trend of nearly 3 decades of declining secretarial influence. The inevitable culmination of this trend would seem to be the complete elimination of the Service Secretary positions themselves. Indeed, the pertinent question now seems to be: Do the Service Secretaries have a useful role to fill in the Defense Establishment of the 1980s?

#### **WHY SERVICE SECRETARIES?**

Compelling as this case against the Service Secretaries may be, it is not conclusive. Several factors suggest a more positive view of the Secretaries and their potential contribution to defense management. Despite frequent DOD reorganizations, which have indeed diminished the Service Secretary's legal authority, it does not necessarily follow that the Secretary's ability to contribute meaningfully to defense management has thereby been irreparably impaired. For all matters other than the operational direction of unified and specified commands, the line of authority runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense to the Secretaries of the military departments.<sup>47</sup> It is the Service Secretary, not the military Chief, who has the formal authority to say "yes" or "no" on all departmental matters.

Not only is there an enormous potential for Service secretarial contributions to DOD management within present legal authority, but, more to the point for our purposes, these contributions are available *only* through Service Secretaries.<sup>48</sup> There are simply no alternatives to the Service secretarial role in enhancing civilian control and in making defense management more efficient and responsive. To see why this is so, it is necessary to examine Service secretarial contributions and to do so in context of the most

frequently advanced alternatives—further centralization of authority within DOD and/or a larger role for the military Chiefs of Staff.

### **The Need for Civilian Control**

The need to enhance civilian control at the operating levels of military departments underlies much of the argument for maintaining Service Secretaries and, indeed, for enlarging their roles.<sup>49</sup> Despite the existence of numerous mechanisms for civilian control available to the President, Congress, and the courts, Americans traditionally have insisted that civilians head the military departments.<sup>50</sup> Service Secretaries always have been viewed as essential to provide a "symbol of the supremacy of civil authority . . . and a constant reminder to the military . . . of their subordinate and instrumental role in a society in which the general welfare rather than military power is the chief purpose of the state."<sup>51</sup>

*Within DOD.* Service Secretaries continue to enhance civilian control because they and their staffs are uniquely situated to exercise civilian oversight on military departmental programs. As heads of departments, Secretaries alone can possess the requisite independence, authority, credentials and intimate knowledge of operating programs to assure that departmental activities are conducted in the public interest.

The requirements for civilian control (and for control generally) are never fully satisfied in any large organization.<sup>52</sup> Control in such organizations is always a matter of degree. Formal-legal approaches to organization, however, such as have characterized each of the DOD reorganizations, address control issues as though they were solvable by designating a single center for all authority. By eliminating or emasculating other centers of authority within large organizations, formalists-legalists assume away continuing control problems. Yet, as students of organizational theory point out, "authority leakage" in any large organization is unavoidable.<sup>53</sup> In fact, the trend toward greater centralization in DOD in the name of enhancing civilian control has paradoxically acted to exacerbate civilian control problems. The reasons for this state of affairs are not hard to find, as a student of defense organizations explains:

Decentralization seems to be a fact of large organization. Whether the organization chart reflects a delegation of decisional authority, decisions will be made, policy will be adopted, and discretion will be exercised at the operating levels. The sole alternative open to top management is determining whether this process will be orderly. . . .

In the prewar Army, decentralization was random. [Army] bureaus gained authority on the basis of their bargaining power. . . . Whether they are completely abolished, the Defense Department will eventually break down into units of manageable size. If no large semi-autonomous agencies are created to replace the three services, there is a real possibility of a system similar to the old War Department bureau organization finally emerging. . . . Highly specialized agencies like army bureaus and the present defense agencies can only be coordinated by a large staff at the top. . . . this very requirement prevents the system from succeeding. As General Marshall discovered in 1941 and as Admiral Rickover testified in 1958, elaborate channels of coordination and decision result at best in delay and at worst in command failure.<sup>54</sup>

A recent look at defense organization found that

attempts to overcentralize decisionmaking at the top seriously impair a Secretary's capability to exercise effective control. Under such circumstances, far too many decisions go unmade, critical issues are not addressed, problems are deferred and the principle of personal accountability is lost in the diffused maze of "staff coordination."<sup>55</sup>

For those reasons, any attempts to achieve effective civilian control solely from the OSD level appear chimerical. Service Secretaries or appropriate analogs in any reorganized DOD structure seem essential. A recent House Committee on Government Operations report arrived at a similar conclusion:

It is not sufficient to say that civilian interests are protected by the Secretary of Defense or the President himself. The interests of the country require civilian leadership, including civilian secretaries, at as many key points in the military organization as is possible.<sup>56</sup>

*Congressional Civilian Control Needs.* Congressional interest in the continued viability of Service Secretaries, of course, is not limited to the enhancement of civilian control within the executive branch. Congress, too, has civilian control responsibilities, and the Congress has judged that Service Secretaries are vital to its legislative process. The legislative history of DOD reorganizations is marked by congressional insistence that separate military departments be maintained. In the 1958 legislation, Congress refused to remove the word "separate" regarding the organization of military departments, denied the Secretary of Defense "unlimited freedom to alter service roles and missions," and insisted that Service access to Congress not be denied. As Representative Vinson observed in 1958:

Congress cannot abdicate the responsibility vested in it by the Constitution. It must continue to reserve to itself decisions as to the basic duties each of the four services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps) is to perform. This has the great advantage of insuring that matters of such vital import to the defense to the nation are not left to the Executive alone, but are subject to the collective judgment of the Congress.<sup>57</sup>

In short, Congress has determined that the success of its civilian control function depends importantly on its continued access to alternative expert judgments concerning Secretary of Defense proposals. Military departments with overlapping responsibilities are the primary source of alternative expert judgments on the Nation's defense posture. For example, because all of the Services share broad responsibility for the defense of the United States against attack, and for the projection of US military power abroad in support of US interests, all of the Services compete to perform those functions and in so doing provide alternatives. Service alternatives on strategic programs resulted in the multiservice strategic force posture—a "Triad" of bombers, land-based missiles, and sea-based missiles—which currently provides the Nation with strategic capabilities and hedges against failure in ways unavailable from any single or dual option. Whether the Triad would have surfaced in the absence of Service competition is moot, but it seems clear that the Congress believes that Service-generated alternatives are essential to its continued role in defense policy. Those alternatives, of course, also serve as "an effective system of checks and balances which is in keeping with the American concept of limiting the power of government, of any agency in government, or of any individual in government."<sup>58</sup>

The Service Secretaries' contributions to congressional deliberations cannot be satisfied wholly by military Chiefs of Service. While Congress needs the views of the military Chief, it also requires the perspectives of civilians who are informed, but less constrained institutionally than their military colleagues. In effect, by having both Chiefs and Secretaries, the perspectives offered to the Congress on Service issues are expanded. Chiefs and Secretaries can, and often do, differ in their assessment of issues, each reflecting his own experiences in ordering the relative importance of policy considerations. (Consider, for example, the recent differences between the Secretary of the Army and his military Chief of Staff on the continued viability of the all-volunteer concept and the approach to satisfying Army manpower requirements.)

Finally, the Secretary serves as a focal point for congressional oversight of departmental activities. Congressional requirements for data and evaluations regarding the implementation of programs have grown enormously.<sup>59</sup> A substantial number of congressional inquiries involve departmental decisions on politically sensitive issues such as base closings, the location of new facilities, and the selection of contractors. Service Secretaries and their civilian assistants obviously are more appropriate respondents on issues like these than are the military staffs. And importantly, placing these responsibilities in the Service secretariats removes a large burden from the Secretary of Defense.

### **Unique Contributions to Defense Management**

Closely related to the Service Secretary's role in providing civilian control at the military department level is his function as a principal manager in the DOD organizational structure. The Service Secretary potentially can bring to the managerial function a unique, balanced contribution—the breadth of perspective found at the ASD level in DOD conjoined with the wealth of technical detail embodied in the military Chiefs.

As noted earlier, arguments for a larger (and stronger) role for the Service Secretary hinge on the assumption that decentralization of authority in the Defense Department is not only necessary but, at least in an informal and unofficial sense, unavoidable. The DOD is simply too large and complex to be managed fully from the top. Even without decentralization, a Service Secretary's responsibilities could be staggering. He alone is responsible to the Secretary of Defense for the efficient operation of the military department and the management of an annual budget in excess of \$30 billion. In the words of the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel:

The office of Secretary of a Military Department has become increasingly demanding of administrative and managerial ability to: (1) cope with the multiplication of complexity and costs of developing and acquiring weapons systems; (2) acquire personnel in the quantity required to maintain and operate the weapons; (3) train military personnel to the high level of skills necessary to function in areas of advanced technology and sensitive operations; and (4) retain enough of those so trained to justify the training investment; but not so many as to impair the vigor of military operations which only youth can provide. No private corporate executive in the world has the managerial responsibility in terms of manpower, budget,

variety of complexity of operations equal or approaching that resting on the shoulders of a secretary of a military department.<sup>60</sup>

*Military Chiefs Not a Management Alternative.* The military Chief, sometimes suggested as an alternative to the Service Secretary, is in fact not an alternative at all. Apart from the erosion of the symbols and substance of civilian control in departmental activities which would occur under a completely military structure, the elimination of Service Secretaries also would remove a unique and essential perspective from departmental management.

Though the military Chiefs usually possess extensive knowledge of program details, most contemporary major weapons procurement and defense personnel decisions demand political judgments on broader matters involving international and domestic politics, the national economy, and societal values. These broader issues "are a legitimate concern (and within the experience) of the civilian leadership, [but] much less so of the military leaders."<sup>61</sup> The Service Secretary's managerial perspective is more attuned than that of the military leaders to "the size of the national defense effort and its effect on the domestic economy."<sup>62</sup> More than that, many military leaders themselves usually eschew a political role. General Matthew Ridgway's (Army Chief of Staff in the mid-1950s) remarks are not untypical.

It is not his [the military man's] responsibility to decide whether the military means which he determines are essential to accomplish the military task assigned to him will cost more than the nation can afford. . . . The military man is to give his honest, fearless, objective, professional opinion of what he needs to do the job that the nation gives him.<sup>63</sup>

One could even argue plausibly that the Service Secretary enables the military Chief to perform his role better, because the built-in civilian/political perspective provided by the Secretary frees the military Chief to provide what he is most qualified to provide: straightforward military advice, unadulterated by political considerations. Thus, Service Secretaries, by providing a more comprehensive perspective, are particularly valuable to the Secretary of Defense in the DOD programming and budgeting cycles as well as in the Defense Systems Acquisition Review Council (DSARC) meetings.<sup>64</sup>

*OSD Not a Management Alternative.* It seems unlikely that these managerial contributions of the Service Secretaries could be

duplicated at the OSD level by Assistant Secretaries. An Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD), while possessing broad and often valuable perspectives on issues, is not as intimately acquainted with programmatic details because of his remoteness from daily managerial activities. A Service Secretary is situated closer to the real needs and requirements of his Service. Knowing its strengths and limitations far better than other DOD civilian executives, he thus is best able to gauge the impact of alternative policies.

More importantly, there are fundamental organizational difficulties which would arise from attempts to manage military staffs directly from the ASD level. Attempts to use staff to oversee line functions often do not result in enhanced efficiency. OSD staff are likely to hold perspectives on policy different from those of the Secretary of Defense. For example, "a major official cannot expect to receive any less biased information from a large staff than from line organizations. Moreover, using such a staff complicates his control and administrative problems considerably."<sup>65</sup> ASDs, as staff, unavoidably encounter difficulties in getting their decisions to "stick." Possessing no authority in their own right, staffs would be challenged particularly on issues viewed as vital to operating units. Thus, far too much of the time of Secretary of Defense would be spent confirming or denying ASD judgments.

Grants of authority to ASDs do not eliminate these difficulties. As Paul Schratz, a knowledgeable student of DOD organization, observed:

the military chief enjoys a special relationship with the service secretary that would hardly emerge were his immediate superior on the Defense (OSD) staff. The "system" may make the DOD official a natural adversary . . .<sup>66</sup>

In effect, the Service Secretary is considered a part of his Service's "family." He thus benefits in a managerial sense from "family ties" that provide him opportunities for influence that simply are not available to other civilian defense executives. And it is important to note that this relationship appears to endure without regard to individual policy differences between a Service Secretary and his military Chief of Staff.

The attempts to use ASDs in a direct managerial role have had detrimental effects on efficiency and effectiveness. Additional OSD staff became necessary and OSD organizational entities grew in numbers and in size. As the GAO observed: "This complicated

arrangement of organizations . . . constitutes a proliferation and extension of the authority of the Secretary of Defense."<sup>67</sup> And as authority is proliferated and extended throughout his staff, the real managerial control of the Secretary of Defense is diminished. Others speak for him, but from perspectives that reflect their own organizational concerns.<sup>68</sup> At least as important, those centralizing arrangements bring with them inefficiencies by generating needless interdepartmental communication.

As requests in the name of the Secretary of Defense are made to military departments, each organizes and staffs itself to the level of detail imposed, responding almost always by creating new offices mirroring the organizational structure of the requesting authority.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, the Service Secretary emerges as the natural mediator of tensions—always present in large organizations—stemming from the conflicting demands of the daily management of details and the need for broad perspectives on future courses of action. Eliminating the Secretary would obliterate this essential link between the two.

A striking example of the need for a Service Secretary's managerial contributions is evident in the continuing DOD and congressional evaluation of the Army's new main battle tank, the XM-1. During the source selection process, then Secretary of the Army, Martin Hoffmann, successfully mediated between the conflicting perspectives of the civilian staff of the Secretary of Defense and the Army's military professionals regarding the future course of the program. The Secretary's direct and continuing role as a synthesizer—a role which he was uniquely qualified to fill—not only avoided a potentially disruptive public confrontation before the Congress but also fused selected parts of seemingly irreconcilable perspectives into a decision that combined the best features of both viewpoints. The Secretary's role is described more fully in the Appendix. As that case study reveals, the Secretary's managerial contribution was vital, and more importantly, unavailable from other DOD managerial assets.

*Catalyst for Innovation.* Potentially, one of the most significant managerial contributions of Service Secretaries is their ability to act as catalysts for innovation within the Department of Defense. The Secretaries are uniquely situated to promote innovation within their military organizations, either on their own initiative or as agents for the Secretary of Defense. Inducing change in large organizations is inherently difficult; in military organizations those difficulties are



particularly acute. In his classic study of innovation and the military, Edward Katzenbach sketches the dimensions of the military's "innovation environment":

The military profession, dealing as it does with life and death, should be utterly realistic, ruthless in discarding the old for the new, forward-thinking in the adoption of new means of violence. But equally needed is a romanticism which, while it perhaps stultifies realistic thought, gives a man that belief in the value of a weapon system he is operating that is so necessary to his willingness to use it in battle. Whether a man rides a horse, a plane, or a battleship into war, he cannot be expected to operate without faith in his weapon system. But faith breeds distrust of change. Furthermore, there is a need for discipline, for hierarchy, for standardization within the military structure. These things create pressures for conformity, and conformity, too, is the enemy of change. Nor is there generally the pressure for the adopting of the new which is found in other walks of life. There is no profit motive, and the challenge of actual practice, in the ultimate sense of war, is very intermittent. Finally, change is expensive. . . .<sup>70</sup>

Whether innovation and, more generally, effective adaptation to a rapidly changing environment can come only from "major or compelling external pressures usually of a political rather than a professional military nature," as some have suggested, is open to question.<sup>71</sup> Yet it seems clear that Service Secretaries can be extremely effective in fostering innovation. Secretaries have an intellectual and career independence which permits them to be less inhibited by institutional constraints in their approach to issues. Secretaries, by asking "why are we doing it this way?" and suggesting changes that are drawn from previous experiences in the profit-oriented business environment, can facilitate beneficial change in the departmental approach to its responsibilities. These perspectives, the Secretary's legal authority over all departmental matters, and his close relationship with his Service's military leadership make the office of the Secretary an ideal focal point for the consideration of new initiatives. And because effective change requires not only new policies, but also astute implementation, the Secretaries' potentially major role in innovation seems clear.

*Some Illustrations of Innovation.* The Service Secretary's role as an innovator has been documented elsewhere.<sup>72</sup> Still, it may be illuminating to mention three cases from the 1960s. In these issues the Service Secretary acted as an agent for the Secretary of Defense, but the initiatives undertaken might as well have been his own.

The first involved a significant change in the Army's approach to the use of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft to improve the mobility of its forces on the battlefield. Secretary of Defense McNamara asked the Secretary of the Army to reexamine the Army's proposed use of tactical aviation to make a "revolutionary break with traditional surface mobility means."<sup>73</sup> In response, the Secretary of the Army established the Howze Board. Chaired by General Howze, an imaginative and innovative officer who long had advocated that the Army make greater use of the mobility offered by fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, the board was staffed with officers possessing similar intellectual propensities. The board's recommendations "led to formation of several experimental units, including the 11th Air Assault Division, the predecessor of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) which subsequently had been used so extensively in South Vietnam."<sup>74</sup> The primary force behind the airmobile concept was clearly the Secretary of Defense and his System Analysis staff, but the Army Secretary played an important role as the Secretary of Defense's agent in supporting the Howze Board study and in ensuring that the board's findings were implemented.

At about the same time, then Secretary of the Army Cyrus R. Vance played a similar role in securing the Army's adoption of the M-16 rifle.<sup>75</sup> In the late 1950s, the Army had standardized its small arms on the M-14, a traditional rifle developed at the Springfield Armory earlier in the decade. Initially, the Army Secretary and OSD seemed willing to approve production of the M-14, but by 1962 OSD became convinced that the Armalite AR 15 was a decidedly superior infantry weapon. Radically nontraditional in its characteristics and completely extra-Service in its origins, the AR 15 challenged the Army's infantry traditions, existing doctrine, and the firm commitment of its Ordnance Department to developing rifles "in-house." Moreover, in advocating the new weapon with increasing vigor through the fall of 1962, OSD challenged the Service's professional competence as well as its traditional right to control the design and purchase of its own weapons. Not surprisingly, the issue soon exploded into a major Pentagon controversy.

Secretary McNamara asked Mr. Vance to manage the problem. Upon assuming the Army Secretary's position in July 1962, Secretary Vance almost immediately raised the rifle issue with Chief of Staff General Earle Wheeler. Although General Wheeler himself may not have been deeply committed on the rifle question, his organization decidedly was. Indeed, the Army Staff and particularly the Army Infantry Center at Fort Benning, Georgia, refused to give the AR 15 serious consideration until McNamara himself forced the issue in

October. A memorandum from McNamara to Vance at that time criticized the M-14, lauded the AR 15, and requested Service views on the merits of the two weapons. General Wheeler responded by staging an extensive series of tests comparing the characteristics of the two rifles. Vance oversaw the tests, evaluated the results, and after rumors surfaced that the Army might have biased its test results in favor of the M-14 (by using traditional doctrinal criteria in evaluating the weapons), initiated a full investigation by the Army Inspector General. The subsequent test results were ambiguous, but did acknowledge some advantages of the AR 15. Caught between his staff on the one hand and a forceful Vance on the other, General Wheeler agreed to purchase a limited but still significant number of AR 15's, thereby enlarging the Army's options regarding future rifle procurement.

Following this decision, the Army Staff focused on the technical aspects of the new rifle's design in what appeared to be an effort to defeat a procurement decision, or failing that, to put a more traditional stamp on the rifle's ultimate design. At this juncture Secretary Vance adopted a more independent role, placing himself squarely between OSD and the Army in a way which helped to carry the basic rifle design through to procurement. During subsequent development stages, Secretary McNamara and his staff objected to the numerous technical changes proposed for the AR 15, but Secretary Vance generally sided with the Army on the need for those modifications. He even joined General Wheeler in advocating the addition of a bolt closure device to the rifle, despite the fact that the only argument for such a device was that Service rifles traditionally possessed a means for manually closing the bolt. Given Vance's apparently strong views on the bolt closure device, Secretary McNamara soon dropped his opposition. In advocating the bolt closure and generally in siding with the Army on its modification proposals, Vance clearly was sensitive to organizational concerns in a way in which OSD was not. Secretary Vance dampened a major DOD confrontation by assuming a position that combined both OSD and Army perspectives. Subsequently, the AR 15—later designated the M-16—was adopted as the standard weapon for US ground forces.

In both of these cases, the Secretary provided the basis for significant innovation in weapons and ultimately in Service doctrine. His unique position—very much a part of his department and the staff of the Secretary of Defense, yet independent of both—permitted the Secretary to function as a catalyst in a fashion not possible for either the Secretary of Defense, his assistants, or the military Chief. His

unique position also allowed him to promote change and organizational adaptation in less dramatic ways. Because he was a part of the organization's routine procedures, he had opportunities to innovate incrementally through day-to-day activities. By introducing additional factors into common perceptions of policy issues and programs, for example, he could serve to catalyze change.

Air Force Secretary Robert Seamans served in a similar way in the Air Force weapons acquisition process. When Secretary Seamans assumed his duties in 1969, the Air Force managed weapon acquisitions on a quarterly basis using an extensive in-house review procedure. Judging this procedure to be relatively ineffective and unresponsive to his own needs, Secretary Seamans identified the 16 most controversial projects for monthly review. Further, he required project directors to meet with him at least once every 3 months. The result of those secretarial-directed initiatives was to improve the Air Force weapons review process and provide the secretariat with closer oversight of developing Air Force weapons programs. (One immediate result was a reallocation of resources to address a then existing C-5 transport wing fracture problem.)

*Managing the Military Profession.* The Secretary's unique position and perspectives are useful in other ways. Occasionally incidents surface that reflect unfavorably either on military institutions or on individual members of the military. Because those incidents can cumulatively reflect adversely on the military profession itself, there are very strong incentives from the military to deal with those situations internally. All professions would prefer to reform their institutions and discipline their members internally. Yet an internal resolution of those incidents by the profession alone could give the appearance of insufficient public accountability. Because the Secretary is the public's representative in the military department, he would seem to enjoy greater public confidence. And because of his close association with and responsibilities for the military members of his department—he is also a member of his Service "family"—the Secretary is ideally situated to assure the military profession that its traditions and norms are fully supported.

The West Point cheating incident of 1976 illustrates this important secretarial role.<sup>76</sup> Following a routine investigation of a cheating incident, allegations persisted that the honor system at West Point had broken down. Here clearly was an issue—the personal honor of its members—that the professional military would have preferred to address internally. Yet because of persistent reports of

"widespread cheating and maladministration at the Military Academy"—a public institution—it was equally clear that an internal investigation probably would not satisfy the need for public accountability. The personal intervention of the Service Secretary seemed essential if both public and professional concerns were to be satisfied. After resolving several outstanding issues requiring immediate attention, Army Secretary Hoffmann appointed a Special Commission on the US Military Academy "to conduct a comprehensive and independent assessment of the cheating incident and its underlying causes." The Secretary personally selected the Commission (including on its membership a distinguished group of Academy and non-Academy graduates), structured its agenda (by providing a comprehensive set of questions which assured that Commission members would address fundamental issues), and gave much of his time to the Commission's activities.

In December 1976 the Commission delivered its report. The report was comprehensive, critical of many aspects of the then existing West Point honor system, and wide-ranging in its recommendations for change. The public response to Commission effort was favorable.<sup>77</sup> Among military professionals, most probably would disagree with certain specific Commission recommendations, but most probably also would concur with the Academy Superintendent's comment that "the Commission's investigation and report will continue to be helpful to West Point in the days and years ahead."<sup>78</sup>

The Army Secretary appears to have resolved the West Point incident to the general satisfaction of public and professional military concerns. What is most important, in terms of the present study, is that the Service Secretary alone—for reasons discussed above—could reasonably expect to have succeeded in this fashion.

### **The Service Secretary as Political Spokesman**

Finally, as a member of the President's administration, the Service Secretary has an important role as *the* political spokesman for the needs of his Service. An administration's decisions on Service programs have an important political and economic impact on US society. Decisions regarding the number of weapon systems to be acquired, the selection of a particular weapon system from among competing prototypes, the source and compensation of military personnel, and the retention or elimination of military bases all fall within the Service Secretaries' responsibilities to implement and

justify to the public and Congress. No one else can reasonably be expected to perform those essentially political functions. The President and the Secretary of Defense have neither the time nor the detailed knowledge to address topics like these on an individual basis.

And because these decisions are viewed as "Air Force," "Army," or "Navy" decisions, officials within OSD, regardless of their role in the actual decisionmaking, are likely to be viewed by the public as inappropriate spokesmen. Moreover, such tasking also would serve to deflect OSD officials from their primary responsibilities—advice and oversight.

Because those decisions involve not only military considerations but also numerous economic and political judgments, the military Chiefs of Staff also would be inappropriate defenders. The Chiefs are without charter, nor do they have the administration's political perspectives to discuss those issues publicly. In fact, attempts to use the Chiefs as spokesmen on those issues would almost certainly erode the apolitical nature of their positions and diminish the value of their contributions to the defense policy process. Some observers believe the Chiefs already have gone too far in that direction:

The Joint Chiefs have consistently allowed themselves to be intimidated by political leaders into supporting policies to which they were or should have been opposed. At one time or another, the chiefs publicly supported Truman's very low defense budgets, Eisenhower's "New Look," McMamara's methods, Lyndon Johnson's war policies, and Nixon's secret bombings. By legitimizing those somewhat controversial policies, the military leaders did a disservice to their country and their profession.<sup>79</sup>

The Service Secretaries, however, are legitimate and politically effective spokesmen on these issues.

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In sum, Service Secretaries can enhance civilian control of the Armed Forces, contribute to effective management of the Department of Defense, contribute to the process of change within their Service, and provide political perspectives for the making and public justification of decisions. All these potential contributions of the Service Secretaries are substantial. Realizing those potentials

presents distinct problems, however. What are the prospects for effective Service Secretaries now, and in the coming years?

## **ACHIEVING SECRETARIAL POTENTIALITIES**

While it is difficult to find a Service Secretary who was "without useful function, irrelevant to contemporary defense policy," and a "major contributor to the confusion that surrounds the discussion of important defense issues," there is some validity in the criticisms of secretarial performance.

Yet, as we have seen, a Service Secretary potentially can make unique and vital contributions to the management of US defense resources, whether as an initiator of policies, or an implementor of others' decisions, or as a synthesizer of Service viewpoints with administration political perspectives. And because there is a continuing public perception that decisions on weapon systems, bases, and personnel policies—decisions that impact importantly on American society—are principally Service (as opposed to DOD) programs, the Service Secretary is uniquely situated to convey the administration's decisions on those issues to the Congress and the public. In short, as discussed earlier, the potential for contributions from the Secretary's position is large.

How might these potentialities be realized? A number of courses of action are available, and three in particular merit further discussion. It will be useful now to examine the contributions to secretarial effectiveness that might accrue from changes in the selection of qualifying criteria for Secretaries, in secretarial working relations, and in organizational arrangements.

### **Getting the Right Person for the Job**

The process generally associated with the selection of political executives has been termed "not so much an organizational process as it is a social-political melee that turns around several axes."<sup>80</sup> Competing preferences among those involved in the selection process (White House, Congress, Agency heads, interest groups, etc.) militates against the prospects for broad agreement on a common set of characteristics viewed as essential to the effectiveness of political executives. So it is with Service Secretaries. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify a number of attributes associated with

effective Secretaries. Job knowledge, executive and political skills, and a willingness to serve are among the more important of these.

*Job Knowledge.* A consistently important attribute of an effective Secretary is his knowledge of defense issues and procedures. Too often, appointments to Service secretariats have been viewed as political rewards. As has been noted frequently by observers of government administration, "as long as the selection of men to key administrative posts is based upon political reward rather than competency, little else that is done will really matter."<sup>81</sup>

The Secretary's knowledge base helps set the tone for his organization. Without his having a background in strategy, for example, it is difficult to imagine a Secretary participating effectively in discussions of that subject. Similarly, the Secretary's knowledge of defense procurement and the defense research and development process seems essential. All of the Services now are procuring increasingly expensive, technically sophisticated equipment. Even the Army, often termed the least technical of the Services, now has a research and development budget in excess of \$2.5 billion.

Additionally, a Secretary's effectiveness in his relations with military officers will partly depend on knowledge of the Service's traditions and perspectives. That such understanding facilitates good relations with his military staff seems obvious. Somewhat less obvious is its contribution to effective management.

As Barton Leach observed (regarding the need for a Secretary to be knowledgeable of his Service's personnel matters, but of equal validity in other areas):

Outrageous personnel action is not unknown in any service or country. . . . You should know enough about your generals to be able to detect ill-advised personnel action when it is proposed. The more you know about these matters the fewer unwise proposals will be made to you . . .<sup>82</sup>

*Executive Skills.* Executive skills clearly contribute importantly to the degree of confidence and independence the Service Secretary is likely to enjoy; and these executive skills must be appropriate to a public policy environment. Management perspectives and systems from private industry are not directly transferable to public institutions, not only because government rules and processes are different, but also because the permanent government bureaucracy is conditioned to respond to appointed executives in fundamentally



different ways. The discipline of profit and loss statements is absent in government bureaucracy, and "risk avoidance" on the part of a Secretary's principal assistants, discussed earlier, can severely constrain secretarial influence. A direct consequence is that a single intradepartmental issue could easily consume the bulk of a Secretary's energy and time. Only by managing his own intradepartmental responsibilities effectively can a Secretary acquire the time to expand his influence in the policy process. In the absence of well-developed executive skills in public policy, a Service Secretary rather easily can incur substantial opportunity costs by misallocating his efforts.

*Political Skills.* Political skills also are a major, yet frequently overlooked, source of secretarial effectiveness. The defense decision process is preeminently political in nature. A Service Secretary shares power with the President, the Secretary of Defense, ASDs, other Secretaries, other executive departments, his subordinates, the Congress, the press, major interest groups, and others. All of those competing power centers have always acted to circumscribe the Secretary's freedom of action by narrowing his opportunities to choose among alternatives. And those pressures are likely to increase greatly in the coming years. Congress, for example, is now asserting a larger role in all aspects of defense policy and can be expected to challenge most major decisions within the Secretary's responsibilities. Local communities, State governments, minorities, labor unions—the full spectrum of interests touched by defense decisions—could easily immobilize or circumscribe secretarial options. A Secretary's success is closely related to his ability to bargain among these competing interests and to develop solutions that combine the best aspects of conflicting positions.

Successful decisions, those that "stick," result from the Secretary's ability to discover "common threads in the ravel of conflicting interests."<sup>83</sup> In the view of former Secretaries, no political skill was more important than the ability to get all relevant information relating to issues from within and without his department. Success in assessing trade-offs, "knowing where to squeeze," and assessing the prospects for innovation depend on the quality and timeliness of information.

*Willingness to Serve.* A willingness to serve, for as long as the President and Secretary of Defense desire him to serve, strongly conditions a Secretary's effectiveness within his department, and thus can directly influence the autonomy and confidence he enjoys

with his superiors and subordinates. Decisions "stick" not only because they are appropriate, but also because their implementation can be monitored by the decisionmaker. A good deal of time also is required for important relationships to mature with the Secretary of Defense, the Congress, other Secretaries, and the public. Constancy, too, is important because it routinizes the Service Secretary's role in major decisions. To be effective, secretarial perspectives must be integrated into early discussions of policy issues as a matter of course. Rapid turnover, such as has characterized the secretariat over much of its existence, greatly enhances the possibility that a Secretary and his staff will spend too much effort in "learning the ropes" and too little in influencing matters of substance. A new administration should insist on a secretarial tenure of at least 3 years.

Among whom are these characteristics available? There is no unambiguous answer. A number of Secretaries, nominated to their positions after having earlier experience in a variety of Pentagon billets, were successful (influential). But others were successful without previous governmental (or Pentagon) experience. And to complicate matters further, still other Secretaries with extensive governmental and indeed Pentagon experience were largely without influence on matters affecting their departments.

Moreover, few candidates are likely to have demonstrated all of these attributes, and the influence of the relative absence of one or more of these characteristics, or the relationship of a given mix, on subsequent performance is uncertain. Nonetheless, in the judgment of former Secretaries, these characteristics can serve as a useful referent in assessing a nominee's potential.

Whatever attributes a new Secretary brings to his job, his actual influence and effectiveness will be strongly conditioned by the existing organizational setting in DOD and his approach to his responsibilities. A closer examination of both of these considerations is in order.

### **The Organizational Setting**

Each incoming Secretary faces two organizational settings—formal and informal. As indicated earlier, despite successive reorganizations of the Defense Department and diminished secretarial prerogatives and authority, the Service Secretary's formal organizational position is still impressive. The Secretary alone is responsible for and has the authority necessary to conduct all affairs

within his department. Beyond the department, his authority extends to all departmental transactions with the Congress, other governmental and nongovernmental organizations and individuals.

However, a Secretary's formal authority and institutional position can only assure that the actions of his Service are undertaken in his name, not necessarily at his personal direction or as a consequence of his particular desires. Also, formal organization authority only locates a Secretary at a key position in his Service's policy machinery, but not necessarily in a key position in the DOD policy process. To a considerable extent, this role is determined by the informal organization setting within DOD.

On an informal basis, there are potentially few limits to the influence Service Secretaries can exercise on strategic, force planning, budgetary, and weapons issues. Some Secretaries have had little or no influence on these matters; yet, others have been valued participants in discussions of those issues.<sup>84</sup> What has mattered was not the Secretary's formal legal position *per se*, but the view the Secretary of Defense held of the Service Secretary's role on policy matters.

Indeed, this last factor seems crucial.<sup>85</sup> In effect, the Secretary of Defense largely defines the informal structure and thus the limits of the Service Secretary's potential. Following the 1958 reorganization, three distinct approaches to DOD policy formulation, each with important implications for the potential contributions of Service Secretaries, have been used by Secretaries of Defense.

The first, which might be labeled the "ASD-dominant approach," characterized the early years of Secretary McNamara's tenure. Assistant Secretaries of Defense assumed pivotal roles in departmental management and were the source of virtually all major new initiatives. The positions advanced by ASDs, often on matters falling within the scope of the Service Secretaries' responsibilities, shaped the basis for most policy discussions and were presumed correct in the absence of overwhelming Service objections. Service Secretaries were viewed only as implementors, the Secretary of Defense's agents in the military departments, with little leeway in implementation. Relatively few informal discussions between the Secretary of Defense and Service Secretaries occurred. In this arrangement, the potential contributions of Service Secretaries obviously were severely constrained.

Another approach emphasized the roles of the Secretary of Defense's personal staff and the military Chiefs. This method, which appeared to characterize the styles of two post-McNamara Defense Secretaries, used the Secretary of Defense's personal staff in roles previously filled by ASDs. The policy perspectives of the Secretary of Defense and his personal staff were supplemented by the views of the military Chiefs. While Service Secretaries might be consulted individually and on an *ad hoc* basis, their role in policy formulation and implementation appeared secondary to that played by either the personal staff or the military chiefs. Relations between the Secretary of Defense and military Chiefs were quite close.<sup>86</sup> Obviously, the potential contributions of Service Secretaries were limited, particularly as regards civilian control at the departmental level.

In the mid-1970s, there appears to have been a conscious attempt by the Secretary of Defense to use Service Secretaries as his principal advisors, in effect as a "kitchen cabinet." Service Secretaries served as principal contributors to policy discussions and acted as a primary source of DOD initiatives. OSD guidance on the budget (so called "budgetary fencing"), relatively rigid previously, became more flexible with correspondingly greater autonomy for Service Secretaries. An attempt was made to limit the participation of ASDs and the personal staff of the Secretary of Defense to broad-gauged policy integration. By providing for participation by Service Secretaries in centralized policy discussions and for decentralized management responsibilities, the "kitchen cabinet" approach appears to offer the greatest opportunities to realize the potentials of the Service Secretary's position.

The variety of informal patterns and roles available within the same formal organizational setting and the relationship between these patterns and secretarial effectiveness emphasize the need for an incoming Secretary to "work" the informal organizational structure—either maintaining an existing pattern or shaping informal relationships so as to participate more effectively. The Secretary's success in achieving favorable "working relations" largely determines his role and influence in the DOD policy process.

*Shaping the Work Environment.* It is convenient to believe that a new Secretary will assume his responsibilities knowing what he has done and can do and whom he can expect to assist him, but the track record of Service Secretaries (and political executives generally) suggests something quite different. Others have goals they would like the Secretary to pursue, and he cannot be certain of his sources of

support. His influence will largely result from his own efforts. The Secretary of Defense and others can help, but only if they are encouraged to do so by the Secretary himself.

What can a Secretary do to shape his work environment? The list of possibilities is long and has been discussed extensively elsewhere. Here we can only indicate the general thrust of an approach to working relations.

*Learning the Environment.* Prior knowledge concerning his Service's programs can be immensely valuable to an incoming Secretary, but it is never adequate. Programs change and look differently when viewed from within. But more importantly, military personalities change frequently, often bringing different perspectives with each personnel change.

Important decisions are often required early, and subordinates and seniors will make judgments, perhaps lasting judgments, based on those initial decisions (or those that are made by default). To an incoming Secretary of Air Force, Barton Leach advised:

You must learn about your department, and fast. One of your predecessors turned over the duties of administration to his Undersecretary for three months to permit a concentrated study of the Air Force and its problems. With the aid of one military and one civilian assistant he obtained a series of papers from the staff and commands, then discussed them in detail. This process had two useful by-products: (1) by requiring staff papers destined for close critical scrutiny at the top level it led staff and commands to re-examine and bring up to date their thinking on the important issues; (2) by the personal conferences with the officers and civilians concerned it brought the Secretary in contact with his key personnel under circumstances where evaluation was easy and unobtrusive.<sup>87</sup>

Also, as quickly as possible, a Secretary should establish or enhance his contacts with others concerned or involved with his program—in OSD, Congress, and with others (Executive Office), as appropriate. These contacts are valuable in providing a different perspective on the major problems and issues his department faces or will face, on previous commitments, and on the personalities most closely associated with his managerial responsibilities. These contacts could also be invaluable in expanding his influence—they could serve as an advisory and political base and thereby enhance secretarial influence.

The perspectives of former incumbents also are valuable, not so much for their views on particular programs, but more for their perspectives on "working" problems—pitfalls they have encountered and overcome, personalities who are likely to be supportive and those who are not.

*Setting Goals.* No Secretary can expect to leave his mark on defense management in the absence of a set of clearly stated and reasonably attainable goals, and these should be set rather quickly.

The scope of a Secretary's responsibilities and his desire to learn from and be sensitive to the concerns of his staff could easily lead to a "wait and see" attitude regarding goals. Yet, the best opportunity to exercise influence on major issues is likely to occur early in his tenure. Later, he could find his flexibility more constrained as the press of daily managerial responsibilities and the inevitable "crises" occur.

Reasonable attainability of goals is essential to the Secretary's reputation and effectiveness. Goals either too ambitious or too modest are likely to be self-defeating. They contribute little to perceptions of secretarial effectiveness (as too ambitious goals go unrealized) and involve large opportunity costs (as too modest goals are pursued).

Goal-setting will certainly not be easy. A Secretary's military and civilian staff, the Secretary of Defense and his staff, and the Congress, among others, will seek to impose their preferences on him. Existing programs also constrain his options.

But political skills, executive judgment, and a Secretary's own sense of purpose can overcome those difficulties. The process of "learning the environment" not only provides a rich menu of worthwhile and attainable objectives, but also an opportunity to fuse those differing views into goals that bear his own stamp.

Goals, of course, are essential to provide a benchmark for his own and others' assessment of his stewardship, and the discussion of goals with principal subordinates and others is an important vehicle of secretarial leadership.

*Establishing Independence and the Confidence of the Secretary of Defense.* It is crucial that a Service Secretary enjoy independence from, and yet the confidence of, the Secretary of

Defense. This condition, so apparently obvious in its relation to secretarial effectiveness, has been more often absent than present in past Secretary of Defense-Service Secretary relationships. Without these twin pillars, the Service Secretary is incapable of effectively managing his relations with his military department, the ASDs, or the Congress. Barton Leach correctly states the need to satisfy these two imperatives in congressional relations, but his advice is appropriate to other relationships as well:

If [the Secretary of Defense] expects you to conceal or misrepresent the facts or to alter your judgment at his direction . . . advise him to get Charlie McCarthy for your job. A relationship of mutual confidence, but also of mutual respect for independence of judgment, must be built up between you (the Service Secretary) and the Sec/Def that make it inconceivable that any issue should arise as to the candor of your testimony to the Congress.<sup>88</sup>

Relevant too are former Air Force Secretary Eugene Zuckert's comments;

When a Service Secretary merely restates automatically an Administration position which may be diametrically opposed to his views as expressed before that official position was announced, he soon loses his effectiveness. . . . During the B-36 inquiry, Navy Secretary Francis Mathews was so far from positions held within his own Department that he was rendered almost useless in the job. He resigned a year later out of sheer embarrassment.<sup>89</sup>

Gaining the Secretary of Defense's confidence is a complex and difficult undertaking. Idiosyncratic factors—the impact of individual personalities and operating styles on Secretary of Defense-Service Secretary relationships—clearly are important but are not easily assessed prior to actual service.

It is difficult for the Secretary of Defense to provide continuing support for each of his Secretaries. An obvious problem is that Service secretarial perspectives usually differ among themselves and compete for the support of the Secretary of Defense. Equally important is the need of the Secretary of Defense for flexibility and independence—if he is to be successful. Other perspectives, internal and external, compete for the attention of the Secretary of Defense. His own success often is contingent on his ability to treat a Service Secretary's program initiatives as bargaining chips rather than firm commitments.

But a Service Secretary can develop bargaining chips too. We suggested earlier that a Service Secretary is not without assets in the competition for support of the Secretary of Defense. An effective Secretary is able to bring the influence of his own relationships in the policy community to bear. But more important, he can offer a unique and essential perspective in defense decisionmaking. The quality and timeliness of his contributions directly bear on his influence. He can provide alternatives that combine the strongest features of a Service-developed alternative in a context that fuses his contribution with those of other policy participants into a comprehensive initiative. Such an initiative would be particularly sensitive to the strengths of the assets of his Service and to the real needs of the Secretary of Defense.

Maintaining his right to be consulted and to exercise choice in his areas of responsibility are vital components of secretarial independence. "Protecting turf" is a continuing, often onerous, claimant on secretarial time. Yet, failing to "protect turf" virtually assures secretarial impotence. As a Government Accounting Office study noted:

When the Secretary of Defense, his deputy, and/or his assistants attempt to participate in day-to-day decisions, they tend to become bogged down in details, pragmatism, and short-term problem solving. The increased involvement in Service program execution at the OSD level reduces the autonomy of the Service Secretaries and thereby reduces their ability to make decisions on issues which are more relevant to them or on which they often have more expertise.<sup>90</sup>

*Secretary-Military Chief Relations.* The continued success of a Service Secretary in maintaining the confidence of the Secretary of Defense is greatly influenced by the vitality of a Service Secretary's relationship with his military Chief of Staff. The Chief of Staff is the primary source of institutional knowledge regarding his Service, knowledge absolutely essential to a Secretary's effectiveness. The Chief also is an indispensable member of the departmental management structure.

For reasons discussed extensively above, neither the Secretary nor the military Chief individually can manage departmental affairs. The managerial requirements are too diverse, and the competencies each man brings are too specialized to satisfy the demands inherent in departmental management. The path to effective management



begins with a cooperative effort based on mutual trust and confidence in which both recognize fully the unique contributions each can make.

Establishing a viable working relationship turns on many of the same considerations which affect a Service Secretary's relations with the Secretary of Defense. But there are important differences, and two major considerations should be mentioned.

The Secretary must recognize the need and sustain the military institutional role of the Chief despite the inherent strains in working relationships which result from that role. In this role, the Chief is responsible for advocating courses of action which he believes vital to preserve and sustain the military institution. A Chief's views on discipline, promotion, management relationships, personnel policies, leadership, and procurement (as was the case with the bolt closure device on the M-16 rifle), while not necessarily rational or responsive from a Secretary's viewpoint, may be essential to sustaining the elan, faith and dedication which assures a responsive and effective military structure. A Chief's views may or may not reflect fully a particular administration's priorities. The Secretary need not agree with these views. But if the Secretary is to be effective he must accept, indeed encourage, a Chief's efforts to promote institutional development.

The military Chief of Staff too must recognize the special needs of his Service Secretary. In particular the Chief must facilitate the Service Secretary's access to the full resources of the department. Staff support and information are critical. And as important, the Chief must assure that his Secretary is fully conversant with all major operational issues discussed in the JCS.

Individual attempts, by either the Service Secretary or the military Chief, to manage a military department are doomed to failure. A cooperative effort, combining the strengths of each and based on mutual trust and confidence, can assure that each military department is an effective participant in all matters affecting the Department of Defense.

*Staff and Secretarial Effectiveness.* Frequently, discussions with regard to the relationship between a Secretary's effectiveness and his staff are centered primarily on staff size. The relatively small size of two of the secretariats—particularly in numbers of professional civilians—has repeatedly generated the suggestion that

enlarging the staff would more or less automatically enhance secretarial effectiveness. Variants in this recommendation include the complete integration of military and civilian staffs or the incorporation of selected military staff (budget and financial management, for example) into the civilian secretariat.

A closer look would show that none of these options would necessarily result in enhanced secretarial effectiveness.<sup>91</sup> The more important variable in the Secretary-staff relationship is the degree of control the Secretary is able to exercise over staff resources. Viewed in this perspective, secretarial effectiveness is closely related to the ability of the Secretary to make the combined assets of his Service headquarters staff responsive to his needs.

Attaining control of any staff is inherently difficult, for reasons discussed earlier, but it is not impossible. Hugh Heclo, in his superb book, *A Government of Strangers*, has sketched the dimensions of an approach.<sup>92</sup> The thrust of Heclo's argument is that control of staffs is best obtained through constructive working relations. Regarding those relations, a promising possibility to enhance secretarial effectiveness is the suggestion to provide him with greater flexibility in forming his own team by enlarging his authority to hire (and fire) senior staff.

### **Reorganization**

Reorganization is fashionable, and perhaps for good reason. Instances occur wherein changes in organizational arrangements do influence patterns of management favorably and do result in improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of agencies and departments of government.

But the effects of reorganization on efficiency and effectiveness are usually exaggerated. Reorganization is certainly no cure-all. As Herbert Kaufmann recently observed, "Logically or empirically, . . . various (reorganization) strategies appear to contribute as much to the problems of executive organization as to their solution. The probabilities of net gains, if any, seem very small."<sup>93</sup>

The arguments throughout this paper support Kaufmann's judgment. A reorganization of DOD organizational components and/or a realignment of responsibilities can do little to rectify problems arising from faulty executive selection procedures, the short tenure of political executives, or the unwillingness or inability of

political executives to make full use of the resources at their disposal. Neither further centralization nor decentralization address those difficulties.<sup>94</sup>

For all of these reasons, only minor adjustments to existing organizational arrangements seem required. More important is a commitment to require that present organizational arrangements function as designed by requiring incumbents to use fully the authority they presently possess.

### **CONCLUSION: SERVICE SECRETARIES—AN IMPORTANT MANAGEMENT ASSET**

It is entirely too easy to disparage the contributions of Service Secretaries to effective defense management; the imperatives of modern warfare—the need for the centralized direction of the Nation's military establishment—and the quest for efficiency through the consolidation of myriad support and training functions easily can incline one toward the view that the locus of policy and management activity within the Department of Defense ought to reside exclusively at the OSD level. The uneven performance of Service Secretaries in discharging their responsibilities reinforces this view.

But as we have seen, there is a unique and vital role for Service Secretaries. By enhancing civilian control, contributing to efficient management, serving as a catalyst for departmental innovation, and acting as his department's spokesman as well as embodying the public interest in his department, the Service Secretary can make unique contributions to DOD management.

And the Service Secretary can play a larger role than he currently plays in DOD affairs, even in discussions of strategy and force posture. The need is there. There is no surplus of well-considered policy alternatives. Professor Reis has put this case persuasively on the need to continue the separate military Services and his argument is as valid in terms of an enlarged role for Service Secretaries:

It is vital to develop and reconsider constantly policy alternatives. This is particularly true during the present period of rapid technological change. The greatest threat to adequate defense comes from gaps in defense capabilities, not from duplication. The existence of several agencies with overlapping missions

encourages competition in determining alternative ways to do the same job and provides the incentive to find gaps that need filling. Competition, far from being extravagant, is probably the surest and cheapest insurance that can be purchased against a fatal gap in defense capabilities. Even if gaps do not occur, the single way is often the most expensive way. The costs are the undiscovered cheaper ways of developing the same capability.<sup>95</sup>

Service Secretaries can be a vital part of the competition to provide policy alternatives. The potential is there. There certainly are no inherent legal or organizational impediments. Needed only are a Secretary of Defense congenial to the notion of a larger role and Service Secretaries with something to contribute.

## **APPENDIX**

### **THE ROLE OF THE SERVICE SECRETARY IN THE ARMY'S ACQUISITION OF THE XM-1**

The Army's position on the XM-1 program antedated the program's inception in 1972. The Army's search for a new main battle tank began under Secretary of Defense McNamara in a joint development effort with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). That cooperative venture did produce a tank design, the MBT-70, which embodied the latest in tank technology, but was judged by the Congress to be far too costly to procure.

In terminating this effort, the Congress merely affirmed what many German and American military officials had concluded earlier, that the joint effort had produced a most sophisticated piece of equipment, ill-suited to the particular needs of either country. However, the cancellation was accompanied by suspicions on the part of each participant regarding the motives of his partner.<sup>96</sup> Each country then initiated its own tank development program, the FRG's resulting in the Leopard 2, while the US Army developed a more austere tank than the MBT-70, the XM-803. By late 1971, however, the XM-803 too was in difficulty with Congress. Still judged too sophisticated and costly, it was cancelled by the Congress in 1972.

The Army, by then determined to acquire a tank embodying the best "state of the art" technology but adhering to rigid cost estimates and time schedules, initiated a third tank development program. The guidance received by the Army included a requirement to incorporate the best features of foreign and domestic tank technology and to consider the use of "off the shelf" components whenever possible.

By 1973, believing its design had satisfied those requirements, the Army contracted with General Motors and the Chrysler Corporation to develop competitive prototypes. The main difference between the two was that the General Motors prototype incorporated a proven diesel engine, while Chrysler pursued unproven but promising turbine technology.

Throughout this competition, the Army emphasized the need to build the best possible armored vehicle within cost estimates and on schedule. Adherence to the schedule was particularly important to the Army because the Soviet Union had recently begun to introduce a new (and more capable) tank, the T-72, into its forces. Army

comments throughout the competition, including those of Secretary Hoffmann, suggested that the XM-1 program was a model of successful prototype development.

However, as the 20 July 1976 deadline to select the winner of the competition approached, strong criticism was encountered from OSD alleging that the Army had been too parochial in its developmental criteria. In particular, OSD argued that the "Army had paid little more than lip service to long-standing requirements"<sup>97</sup> that the XM-1 should be standardized with its German counterpart, the Leopard 2. Specifically, OSD pointed out that an alternative turret, capable of accommodating a West German or British 120mm gun (as opposed to the US Army's 105mm), as well as alternatives to the proven diesel engine, had "not been studied in the depth required for an informed decision."<sup>98</sup> These additional study requirements would delay the selection decision by as much as 1 year. Depending on the standardized components selected, procurement could be delayed until 1982.

Discussions in June and early July between then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and then German Minister of Defense Georg Leber revealed additional opportunities to align the US and German tank programs more closely, and thus strengthened OSD's position. Yet, given the impending formal selection decision, a resolution of the OSD and Army views was imperative.

The Army claimed that it had satisfied all OSD requirements and that a single contractor should be selected and full-scale procurement begun as quickly as possible. Army developers felt that they had fulfilled standardization criteria when they examined foreign as well as domestic technology. If standardization was desired later, the Army believed those changes could be negotiated subsequently with the primary contractor that was selected. The emphasis placed on the rapid acquisition of a new tank meant acquiring an "off the shelf" 105mm gun with improved ammunition (a weapon already extensively used in NATO and thus, at least in the short term, a contribution to greater standardization). The 120mm gun which the FRG favored was not expected to be ready until 1982. Moreover the Army seemed committed to the diesel engine because of its proven reliability, and because it further enhanced the prospects for rapid operational deployment. Further, US tank doctrine differed from West German doctrine, reflecting the differing combat experience and professional backgrounds of each country's armor officers. The FRG optimized its tanks and doctrine for employment in Central Europe

while the United States focused on worldwide employments, from deserts to polar regions. Those differences obviously tended to make agreement on standardized components more difficult.

In sum, the Army professionals felt that the program had been managed well, that both prototypes performed well, and that rapid modernization of the US armored forces was imperative. Accordingly, there seemed to be no reason to delay the selection decision further. Indeed, Major General Robert Baer, the Army program manager, was so upset over DOD-imposed changes that he reportedly took steps to resign in protest.<sup>99</sup>

While not differing with many of these conclusions, OSD emphasized the attainment of political objectives—improved relations with Germany resulting from cooperative standardization efforts—plus enhancement of the military effectiveness of the *entire* alliance. OSD believed that NATO's tank forces would be more effective in the coming decades if the principal alliance partners could agree on the use of the standardized guns, ammunition, engines, fuels, tracks, fire control systems, and tools. OSD was sympathetic to the Army's view that a new main battle tank should be placed in the field as rapidly as possible, but it felt that this consideration was of lesser importance now that circumstances appeared quite favorable to gain these other two objectives. Accordingly, OSD was willing to delay the program decision (some initial Army estimates were that the delay might be as long as 2 years)<sup>100</sup> to permit contractors to resubmit proposals incorporating a turret capable of accommodating either the 105mm or 120mm gun, and both diesel and turbine engine options. OSD also believed that continued competition between contractors during the redesign process would result in significant cost savings as compared to a redesign undertaken by a single source.

Secretary Hoffmann held a unique position between those two views. His institutional role as a representative of the Secretary of Defense and the Army afforded him an entry to both sides of the controversy but with a firm commitment only to resolve the issue in the interests of US security requirements. Thus, he alone could successfully combine and articulate both perspectives without endangering either. This he did with dexterity.

The resulting decision combined the important features of both OSD and Army viewpoints. Secretary Hoffmann supported the OSD position in that the source selection decision was delayed and both

contractors were requested to resubmit proposals incorporating a dual-capable turret, metric fasteners, the German gunner's auxiliary telescope, and both diesel and turbine engine options. He also emphasized his intent to arrive at a common 120mm gun with the FRG.<sup>101</sup> An important commitment thus was made by the Army to standardization and, accordingly, to achieving the political values desired by OSD. Moreover, Secretary Hoffmann's decision to support a new competition centering on the incorporation of standardized components rather than selecting a single contractor before redesigning, potentially would result in savings of between \$700 million and \$1 billion.<sup>102</sup>

The Secretary also partially supported the Army position in that GM and Chrysler were limited to only 120 days to resubmit bids incorporating the standardization options. And while the Secretary intended eventually to reach agreement on the 120mm gun, the dual turret would permit the Army to deploy its first XM-1 tanks with 105mm guns and without delay.

The Secretary's success in merging the OSD and Army views can be seen in the strong support given to his decision by Deputy Secretary of Defense Clements, the military project manager for the XM-1, and by members of the Congress.<sup>103</sup> Secretary Hoffmann's congressional testimony, by buttressing the "continued competition" decision advocated by OSD with his own strong support, appears to have averted an otherwise potentially disruptive congressional debate. Had Secretary Hoffmann not mediated the contending Army and OSD perspectives, his own role with Congress could have been compromised. This, in turn, might have led to severe criticism of either the Army's or OSD's positions, thus weakening the overall program effort.

Subsequently, Chrysler Corporation was selected as the prime contractor. Tanks have yet to be produced under the revised criteria and standardization initiatives are continuing. Subsequent difficulties with procurement and standardization could occur. But what is important in terms of the present study is that the Army Secretary's role in the XM-1 decisions was not unusual. Service Secretaries often do provide DOD with unique managerial capabilities unavailable from other sources.



## ENDNOTES

1. The literature is extensive. John Elting Treat, "Survey of Previous Reports on Organizational Reform in the Foreign Affairs Community," (Draft Report submitted to the Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy, June, 1974) is a useful summary of government studies. Among numerous academic studies are Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, (Harvard, 1957); Paul Y. Hammond, *Organizing For Defense*, (Princeton, 1961); John C. Ries, *The Management of Defense*, (Johns Hopkins, 1964); Clark A. Murdock, *Defense Policy Formulation*, (State University of New York, 1974); and Demetrios Caraley, *Politics of Military Unification*, (Columbia, 1966).
2. "Let's Fire 18 Presidential Appointees," *Armed Forces Journal*, February 1975 p. 4; and Defense Manpower Commission, *Defense Manpower: The Keystone of National Security, Report to the President and the Congress*, April 1976, pp. 439ff (hereafter cited as *Tarr Report*) are recent comments. Ries, *Management*, discusses earlier criticisms. Also, see "Report to Senator Kennedy from Committee on the Defense Establishment" (Symington Report), *New York Times*, 6 December 1960.
3. "Let's Fire 18 Presidential Appointees," p. 4.
4. A full discussion of the organization and staffing of the assistant secretariats is contained in *Department of Defense Appropriations FY 1978, HR 7933*, Senate Committee on Appropriations, 95th Cong., 2d sess., Part 2, Defense Manpower.
5. Ries, *Management*, p. 102. The purpose of the act was to institutionalize the processes that had won the war. The National Military Establishment concept embodied in the act was viewed as a workable compromise to attain integration such as had occurred in the war while retaining the advantages of individual service departments. Walter Millis *et al.*, *Arms and the State*, (The Twentieth Century Fund, 1958), pp. 143ff; Caraley, *Politics of Military Unification*; and Hammond, *Organizing for Defense*, discuss this issue extensively.
6. US, Defense Manpower Commission, *Staff Studies and Supporting Papers, Vol 1, General Historical, Management, and Miscellaneous*, May 1976, pp. 11-12. (Hereafter cited as *DMC Vol. 1*).
7. Ries, *Management*, p. 129.
8. *DMC Vol. 1*, p. 33.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Ries, *Management*, pp. 147-148.

11. *Report of the Rockefeller Committee on Department of Defense Organization*, for Senate Committee on Armed Services, 83d Cong., 1st sess. (1953), p. 3.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
13. Ries, *Management*, p. 152; and Hammond, *Organizing for Defense*, p. 289.
14. Ries, *Management*, p. 159.
15. C. W. Borklund, *The Department of Defense* (Praeger, 1968), pp. 65-66.
16. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense*, pp. 291ff.
17. Ries, *Management*, p. 181.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
21. *Ibid.*
22. The Defense Supply Agency was redesignated the Defense Logistics Agency in 1977.
23. *Ibid.* Secretary McNamara discusses those initiatives in the *Department of Defense, Fiscal Year 1969 Posture Statement*, pp. 195-198.
24. Eugene M. Zuckert, "The Service Secretary: Has He a Useful Role?" *Foreign Affairs* 44 (April 1966): 464-466; and Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969* (Harper, Colophon Books, 1971), p. 76.
25. Enthoven and Smith, *How Much is Enough?*, p. 76.
26. Zuckert, "The Service Secretary," pp. 465-466.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 476-477.
28. Murdock, *Defense Policy Formulation*, p. 170; and Secretary Laird, Department of Defense, *Fiscal Year 1971 Defense Program and Budget*, pp. 74-77.
29. Air Force Secretary Seamans was not consulted or informed before the bombing of Hanoi in 1972. Army Secretary Callaway lodged a complaint regarding the absence of consultations on strategy in 1975. See *Access of Service Secretaries to Military Information, Sixteenth Report*, House

Committee on Government Operations, 94th Cong., 2d sess. (1976), p. 2. (Hereafter cited as *Access of Service Secretaries*).

30. Murdock, *Defense Policy Formulation*, p. 168.

31. *Tarr Report*, p. 436.

32. J. Ronald Fox, *Arming America: How the U.S. Buys Weapons*, (Harvard, 1974), p. 14.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

35. *DMC Vol. 1*, "Working Paper C," p. 25.

36. Fox, *Arming America*, p. 71.

37. Lawrence J. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Indiana, 1976), p. 27.

38. *Tarr Report*, pp. 89-90.

39. National Academy of Public Administration, *Secretarial Leadership: An Inquiry into Problems of Federal Departmental Management*, Report to the Bureau of the Budget, May 1970, Appendix 6, pp. 2-3.

40. Thomas G. Cody, "Use Experience: Trying to Do the Job," *Government Executive* 9 (May 1977): 24.

41. Fox, *Arming America*, pp. 88-89.

42. *Ibid.* Also see Cody, "Use Experience," pp. 29-32.

43. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs*, p. 4; and Hammond, *Organizing for Defense*, p. 301.

44. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense*, p. 298.

45. *Symington Report*; *New York Times*, 6 December 1960.

46. *Tarr Report*, pp. 454-455.

47. 10 USC 8012 and DOD Directive 5100.1 Change 2, 17 June 1969, p. 6.

48. The opportunities for Service Secretaries to contribute in the present formal organizational setting has been documented amply by others. James M. Roherty, *Decisions of Robert S. McNamara* (Miami, 1970), p. 91, suggests a close harmony between McNamara and Air Force Secretary Harold Brown.

Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., *On Watch* (Quadrangle, 1976), p. 397, describes Army Secretary Vance's role in formulating a long-range policy toward Cuba following the Cuban missile crisis. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs*, comments on Navy Secretary Nitze's "major role" in the policy process at page 4. All of the Secretaries have opportunities to exercise major influence on procurement decisions. They are the designated source selection authorities for the Secretary of Defense.

49. The notion of civilian control admits of various meanings. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, discusses the concept in terms of "objective" and "subjective" civilian control, but this approach does little to illuminate contemporary civilian control issues. Burton Sapin, *The Making of United States Foreign Policy* (Praeger, 1966) p. 139, defines civilian control as a "condition in which major policy decisions regarding the military establishment . . . made by politically responsible civilian leadership." Ries, *Management*, p. 198, associates civilian control with political responsibility and the "final selection of means." Political accountability and influence in shaping military programs are taken here to be the essence of the concept.

50. Louis Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power* (Chicago, 1951), p. 102.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

52. Anthony Downs, *Inside Bureaucracy* (Little, Brown, 1967), pp. 132ff.

53. Downs, for example, discusses this phenomenon in *Ibid.*, p. 134.

54. Ries, *Management*, pp. 204-205.

55. US, Department of Defense, Blue Ribbon Defense Panel, *Report to the President and the Secretary of Defense on the Department of Defense*, July 1970, p. 23. (Hereafter cited as *Blue Ribbon Defense Panel Report*.)

56. *Access of Service Secretaries*, p. 11.

57. Ries, *Management*, p. 187.

58. Air Force Secretary Eugene Zuckert, "US Air Force Press Release," 18 September 1964.

59. US, Comptroller General, *Suggested Improvements in Staffing and Organization of Top Management Headquarters in the Department of Defense*, Report of the Comptroller General of the United States, April 1976, Chapter 6. (Hereafter cited as *Comptroller General Report*).

60. *Blue Ribbon Defense Panel Report*, p. 37.

61. Paul R. Schratz, "The Role of the Service Secretary in the National Security Organization," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 101 (September 1975): 22.
62. Ibid.
63. Matthew D. Ridgeway, *Soldier* (Harper, 1956), p. 274, quoted in Ralph Sanders, *The Politics of Defense Analysis* (Dunellen, 1973), p. 154.
64. The DSARC is chaired by the Defense Acquisition Executive, usually the Under Secretary for Research and Engineering. It includes the key officials in DOD and reviews each major weapon system at the three most important points in its life: conceptual to validation phase, validation to full-scale development phase, and full-scale development to production phase. The DSARC was established to advise the Secretary of Defense and his Deputy of the status and readiness of a program to proceed to the next phase of its life cycle. A full discussion of the DSARC is contained in DOD Directives 5000.1 and 5000.2. DARC procedures recently have been revised and these revisions point to a larger role for Service Secretaries in the weapon acquisition process.
65. Downs, *Inside Bureaucracy*, p. 154.
66. Schratz, "The Role of Service Secretaries," p. 24.
67. *Comptroller General Report*, p. 48.
68. Downs, *Inside Bureaucracy*, Chap. VII.
69. *Comptroller General Report*, p. 48.
70. Edward L. Katzenbach, Jr., "The Horse Cavalry in the Twentieth Century," in Carl J. Friedrich and Seymour E. Harris (eds.), *Public Policy* (Harvard, 1958), p. 148.
71. Harry Howe Ransom, "The Politics of Air Power—A Comparative Analysis," in Friedrich and Harris, *Public Policy*, p. 87.
72. Paul R. Schratz, "The American Secretaries of Navy, 1961-1967," unpublished manuscript.
73. Enthoven and Smith, *How Much is Enough?* p. 103.
74. Ibid., p. 101.
75. Data for this section are drawn from Thomas McNaugher, "McNamara and the Marksmen: The Army Buys the M 16 Rifle" (tentatively titled draft dissertation, Harvard University, 1977).

76. Materials for this section are taken from Association of Graduates, United States Military Academy, *Assembly 35* (March 1977); and interviews.

77. The Louisville *Courier-Journal* Editorial, 23 December 1976, is representative. "The answers devised by a civilian commission for West Point's worst-in-history cheating scandal are wisely and properly directed.... With luck and diligence, this set of recommendations could validate not only the justly revered Honor Code, but also the principle of civilian control over military affairs."

78. Letter, Superintendent, United States Military Academy to West Point Graduates, 18 February 1977, p. 3.

79. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff*, pp. 180-181.

80. Hugh Heclo, *A Government of Strangers: Executive Politics in Washington* (Brookings, 1977), p. 95.

81. Cody, "Use Experience," p. 35.

82. W. Barton Leach, "The Job of a Service Secretary," unpublished seminar paper, Serial No. 103, Harvard University, 27 December 1956.

83. Reis, *Management*, p. 202.

84. See note 48, above.

85. Zuckert, "The Service Secretary," and interview data confirm the crucial influence of the Secretary of Defense on Service secretarial opportunities for influence. The following discussion is drawn from interview data.

86. Zumwalt, *On Watch*, p. 477, confirms this relationship.

87. Leach, "The Job of a Service Secretary," p. 15.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

89. Zuckert, "The Service Secretary," p. 471.

90. *Comptroller General Report*, p. 50.

91. Heclo, *A Government of Strangers*, *passim*. Heclo argues persuasively that additions to the staff can never be large enough in terms of the size of the management unit to provide an effective control technique. Eventually, the political executive must make existing staff responsive to him.

92. *Ibid.*, Chapters 5-7.

93. Herbert Kaufmann, "Reflections on Administrative Reorganization," *The 1978 Budget: Setting National Priorities*, ed. Joseph A. Pechman (Brookings, 1977), p. 392.

94. Of course, reorganization initiatives can have a profound effect on organizational behavior. What is suggested here is that formal reorganizational initiatives are unlikely to have much impact on the *efficiency* and *effectiveness* of DOD management. The existing arrangements appear to be about the right balance between the imperatives of centralized management, the continuing need to generate policy alternatives, and congressional oversight requirements. With regard to further centralization, it is interesting to note that the tenures of OSD staff differ little from those of Service secretarial staff and thus provide no rationale, based on tenure, for centralizing initiatives. See Korb, *The Joint Chiefs*, p. 27; and *Tarr Report*, pp. 89-90.

95. Reis, *Management*, pp. 206-207.

96. Sources of this account are: *US Army XM-1 Tank Program*, Hearings before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, 94th Cong. 2d sess. (1976); and interviews.

97. Benjamin F. Schemmer, "XM-1: NATO Standardization Breakthrough or Rumsfeld's TFX?", *Armed Forces Journal* 114 (September 1976): 22.

98. *Ibid.*

99. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

100. *US Army Tank Program Hearings*, p. 20.

101. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 15-16.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 12 and *passim*. Congress, of course, was not uniformly pleased with the decision. Some members of Congress, particularly the House Armed Services Committee, objected to the XM-1 decisions. For an opposing view, see F. Clifton Berry, Jr., "House Panel Slams XM-1 Delay," *Armed Forces Journal* 114 (October 1976): 34-35.

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